THIRTY-TWO PAGES. ONE PENNY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 359. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 16TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

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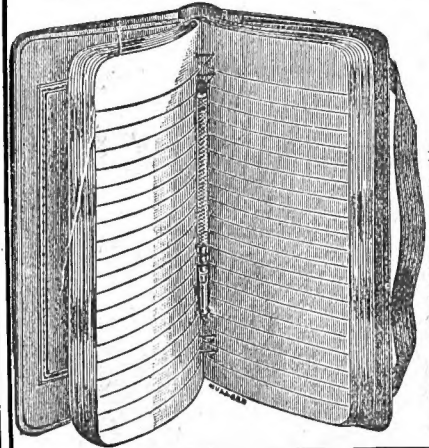

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SHORT STORIES

Edited by C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 359.] For the Week ending November 16th, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

THE LADY OF THE CIGARETTES.

SHE was a little brown thing with marvellous liquid eyes, like unfathomable pools of ink, set in a small, oval, impish face.

Her friends nicknamed her the Lady of the Cigarettes, because she was seldom visible without a slim slip of a scented cigarette between her flashing rows of tiny, rice-kernel teeth.

Harcourt met her first in the wings of the Frivolity stage, where she sat poised upon an impossible painted stump, puffing at the inevitable cigarette and awaiting the cue for the ballet.

She was made up atrociously. Harcourt was an artist, and he recognised that fact at once with a super-sensitive twinge. However, the badly-managed grease paint on her cheeks, and the thick layers of Indian ink round her eyes, did not wholly disguise her elfish individuality, or the beauty of those liquid wells of shadow which illuminated her plain little face.

At first Harcourt thought it was those wonderful soft, dark mirrors that distinguished her from the common herd of ballet girls, and, later, he decided that it was the witchery of her glancing little teeth.

"What do you think of Cigarette?" Thorwald, the reporter, asked, as they stumbled out of the dingy stage entrance together.

"Nothing," Harold replied tersely.

Thorwald laughed easily.

"She's a fascinating little imp. Look out for yourself."

Harcourt sniffed disdainfully.

"Spare me your warnings," he said haughtily. "A girl of that stamp is not my style at all."

At that very moment Cigarette's toes were twinkling merrily in the front row of the ballet, while her lips were parted roguishly in the approved smile.

Strange to say, she was thinking about Harcourt. This was a very flattering circumstance, for Cigarette rarely deigned to think about anything, let alone a mere man.

"Men are so plentiful," she was wont to remark pathetically, in her soft, plaintive, contralto voice. And so they were, in her sphere.

Harcourt, however, was not in her sphere, and clever little Cigarette recognised that fact immediately.

"He's a real gentleman," Cigarette told herself in time to the rattling orchestra, "and I'd like to know him."

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The next time Harcourt ran across her was a year later at her *début* as a comic opera *prima donna*.

Cigarette was one of those interesting constellations that blaze suddenly into a flame of brilliant notoriety, and, after a brief flash of glory, shoot downwards into oblivion and are lost to sight for ever.

Harcourt happened to stroll into the theatre upon the first night of Cigarette's scintillation among the heavenly bodies of light, and sat, or rather stood, the first act through. He soon decided that the score of the opera was horribly mediocre and the book wretchedly dull, but he lingered on, held by a spell of magnetism emanating from a pair of wonderful dark eyes.

"She has learned how to make up," was his first thought, as he gazed eagerly across the footlights at the naturally painted face of the *petite artiste*.

When the curtain dropped Harcourt left the theatre, determined to go elsewhere. He lit a cigarette, and started up the avenue. The cigarette was a very good one, and in some unaccountable way it brought back a vague recollection of his first meeting with a wicked little lady of that name. A soft mist of smoke encircled his head, drifted before his eyes, filled his nostrils, clouded his brain. From out the faint blue rings grew a pair of melting black eyes, smiling coquettishly, daringly, into his face.

Suddenly he paused. "She must be on the stage again by this time," he told himself. Then he rushed to the theatre.

As he entered the place for the second time Thorwald touched his elbow.

"Where have you been, old man?" Thorwald asked. "Miss Greyson sent me to tell you to come and see her. She is in the stage-box on the left, and spied you during last act."

Harcourt pulled himself together.

"All right, lead the way," he said with assumed alacrity, and a few moments later, Cigarette, bursting upon the stage amid a torrent of orchestration, espied his handsome, dark head bending very tenderly above Miss Lillian Greyson's fair curls.

Cigarette's eyes widened wickedly, and her little teeth gleamed cruelly at the sight.

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She had not forgotten her brief acquaintance with this man, who never even deigned to notice her when she passed him.

The next day Harcourt received through Thorwald an invitation to a wine supper given by the newly-fledged *prima donna* to commemorate her successful first appearance.

His unexpected presence at that uproariously Bohemian affair overwhelmed Thorwald with consternation. The latter was aware of Harcourt's recently announced engagement to the stately Miss Greyson, and he mentally anathematised Cigarette when he saw her favour Harcourt by seating him at her right hand.

Thorwald, however, was compelled to acknowledge the fascination of his hostess.

"By Jove!" he told himself, "if I had not learned my lesson so thoroughly I believe I should make an ass of myself again over that little imp. She's a bit of concentrated magnetism. Zeus! What eyes she has, and what a deliciously wicked little mouth! Well, I can see that it is inevitable that Harcourt is bound to make an ass of himself."

Harcourt meanwhile was entirely oblivious of everybody and everything except the alluring, laughing, elfish little being at his side.

Presently Cigarette turned away from him and favoured the ruddy-face pondérous individual at her other side with a brilliant smile and a witty sally.

Harcourt immediately hated that man. He felt that it would be a positive pleasure to throttle him, and he mentally anathematised the vulgar little millionaire until Cigarette again leant in his direction and mischievously puffed a voluminous cloud of faint, pearly tinged smoke from between her vivid carmine lips into his very face, and coquettishly inclined her head nearer and nearer his own until those glorious misty eyes seemed to melt into his very soul, sending a twinge of rapture thrilling through all his being.

That was the beginning of what was in reality a double existence for Harcourt.

On the occasion when he found himself in the society of the cultured, high-bred Miss Greyson he felt an intense, overwhelming tenderness for her, and loathed himself because of the mad, unhealthy fascination which had grown into his life.

Then the moment he left Miss Greyson's presence he was haunted by Cigarette's enticing black eyes, and they followed him hour by hour like a tangible presence, and wrought upon his imagination until he rushed off to Cigarette's apartment and assuaged the mad longing by gazing his fill into their unfathomable depths, and kissing all the impishness out of the little brown face.

And Cigarette. What did she think of the handsome, impetuous young artist who made love to her with all the condescension of a prince, and demanded her caresses as though they were his due?

It was a new sensation for her. She thought Harcourt loved her, and she had never been truly loved before. The handsome artist gentleman was a revelation to the plebeian girl who had been educated in the slums of the metropolis. His refinement, his talent, his tenderness towards her constituted a charm that touched that part of Cigarette that would have been a heart in anyone else, and she proceeded to worship him with all the fervour and wild impetuosity of her tempestuous nature.

Sometimes Harcourt found his enchantress rather impossible.

One night—it was Christmas Eve—he carried her a diamond bracelet.

Cigarette opened the dainty parcel, all the while puffing sullenly at her cigarette. When she saw the bauble her small features set themselves in a diabolical scowl, and she flung the jewelled band into Harcourt's face.

Then she threw her small self into his arms and burst into a storm of sobs and reproaches.

"Why did you buy me that? Oh, why did you offer it to me?" she cried. "Other men have given me diamonds. I don't want them from you. You have always treated me differently—more as other women are treated."

"My darling!" Harcourt protested soothingly; "but I didn't know. I thought you liked such things. I wanted to give you some sort of remembrance. What can I get that will please you?"

"Will you give me whatever I choose?" asked Cigarette, with as near an approach of shyness as she had ever experienced.

"Why, of course I will, little girl."

"I want a portrait of you—not a photograph," quickly, as Harcourt made a motion towards the centre table, whereon rested a large cabinet photo of himself in a superb silver frame. "I want a miniature, a painting on ivory, like those you showed me the other day."

"Very well, you shall have a minature of me, but it will not be ready in time for Christmas."

"Then you shall give me your working palette with the colours smeared on just as you showed it to me in your studio last week. I don't know of anything else you have handled so tenderly and lovingly as that palette. I will fasten it on the wall of my dressing-room, where it will always speak to me of your dear self, and your beloved art."

Harcourt was as good as his word, and in due time Cigarette received an exquisite miniature executed by a noted artist.

It was a year from the date of the commencement of Harcourt's infatuation, when he awoke one day to the fact that the haunting black eyes were not as haunting as they had been.

He was no longer intoxicated by Cigarette's presence, and once or twice lately when he kissed her he experienced the slightest possible sensation of repulsion at the smoke on her breath.

Now and again he was rudely shocked by a chance glimpse of the dense illiteracy which underlaid her superficial, scintillating cleverness.

One day Thorwald, in a spirit of curiosity, told Cigarette that Harcourt was going to be married.

"So!" she said. "Have a cigarette?"

"She's absolutely heartless," Thorwald muttered when he left her.

Cigarette did not cry after Thorwald left her. She scorned tears as a cowardly weakness.

"I'll go and see him," she decided desperately, "just once, for the last time." And the next day Harcourt found her in possession of his chambers when he returned from breakfast.

"Mornin', old fellow. Have a cigarette?" she said, with all her accustomed *sang-froid*.

"What do you mean by coming here?" Harcourt inquired, coldly and a trifle uneasily.

"Came to see you, dear boy. You used to beg me to come. Don't you remember?" And Cigarette seated herself on top of the big table amid the *débris* of odd pipes, tobacco jars, and quaint *bric-à-brac*, looking like a queer bit of an Eastern curio herself.

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"Listen, Cigarette, I am going to get married. Do you understand? And we must stop all that sort of nonsense."

Cigarette laughed, and puffed nervously at her perfumed holder.

"I know all about it," she said. "I only came to say good-bye, old chap. Can't you put up with me long enough for that?"

Harcourt still felt doubtful. She looked so eerie and witch like and wicked wreathed with a curtain of drifting smoke, that he mistrusted her good intentions.

At that moment voices sounded indistinctly on the landing outside Harcourt's door, followed by an assured knock thereon.

Harcourt paled.

"There is Miss Greyson," he breathed. "What shall I do with you?" And he turned upon Cigarette furiously. "Why did you, come here to spoil my life?"

"Here's a cupboard just big enough for me, old fellow. Let your friend come in. I won't be in the way." And Cigarette fitted her tiny self into a wee bit of a cupboard, scarcely large enough for a good-sized mouse to be comfortable in.

There was no help for it, so Harcourt admitted his lady-love and her chaperon, and entertained them with a nervous energy.

As Lillian Greyson expressed it to her chaperon afterwards: "He seemed so exceedingly glad to see us that he got rid of us as quickly as possible."

Their retreating footsteps still echoed in the corridor when Harcourt opened the cupboard door,

"Really!" he exclaimed, "you might have had sense enough to put your cigarette out. I could see smoke drifting through the cracks of the door all the while they were here. Good Heavens! Cigarette, what's this?"

Cigarette stumbled out into the room, her garments all aflame.

It's nothing much, dear boy," she gasped as Harcourt wrapped her in a heavy rug. "My cigarette dropped on my dress, and I was afire before I knew it. I felt myself burning but I couldn't do anything; and I didn't call out, old boy, because that would have got you into trouble, and besides I didn't mind if I was burned up as I was to lose you. Better get me home. It's all right, old man. Don't feel so bad."

"Mornin', old fellow. Have a cigarette?" she said.

Harcourt was sobbing by this time. The fire was out, but poor little Cigarette's body was cruelly burned.

"You said I was an electric spark, you know," she went on, with feeble gaiety, "and now I have ignited—spontaneous combustion—I've gone off in smoke just like a cigarette. Dear old boy, I'm glad to go since I've lost you."

Then she fainted, and the doctor who was called said that she could not possibly live for more than twelve hours.

The next day Thorwald met a brother reporter. "Have you heard the news?" he said; "Cigarette's dead. Died last night."

"You don't say so," his *confrère* replied. "What was the trouble?"

"Her clothing caught fire in some way, and she went the way of her beloved cigarette. By the way, are you going to Harcourt's wedding to-morrow? I hear it is to be quite a swagger affair."

Oswald Everett.

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GOLDEN ✱ STAR.

- - A Romance - -

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

On the eve of the fall of the Inca empire Vilcaroya marries Golden Star, and with her drinks a potion, the result of which is a death-like trance, in hope of fulfilling the prophecy that the empire shall be restored by one who has come alive from the grave. Three hundred and sixty years later Professor Lamson brings, as he thinks, Vilcaroya's mummy from Peru to England. His friend Djama believes that he can restore it to life, and does so. Six months later the party return to Peru, Ruth, Djama's sister, going with them. At Panama they meet Hartness, a friend of Lamson's, who joins in the expedition. Arrived in Cuzco, Vilcaroya put himself into communication with the remnant of his people, and prepares to begin his work. He summons one Tupac-Rayca to meet him with twenty others of the old Inca blood on the Rodadero, a plain behind the great fortress. The same night at dinner he accidentally reveals the fact that Golden Star was his sister as well as his wife. It is explained to him that such a union as this is impossible in the modern world. Later on the same night he entices Djama on to the Rodadero and bids his men blindfold him. He then leads them by a way of which he only knows the secret into the Hall of Gold, a subterranean chamber in which some of the treasures of the Incas are hidden, where he dresses himself in the imperial robes, and then, seated on a throne, he receives the oath of allegiance from Tupac and his comrades. He shows Djama the treasures, and promises to load him with them if he will restore Golden Star to life, and threatens him with death if he reveals what he has seen. After this he has some of the gold taken to their lodgings, and with part of this buys a convenient hacienda in the country, and in due course they set out for the resting-place of Golden Star. Her body is found and brought back to the hacienda, and there, when his work is almost finished, Djama refuses to complete it unless Vilcaroya will swear to give Golden Star to him. He refuses, but afterwards consents on condition that Djama will give Ruth to him. Djama brings Ruth, Hartness, and the Professor to Golden Star's bedside. Ruth reproaches them both and reconciles them, making Djama promise to finish his work. This he does, and Golden Star awakes, but has lost her memory. Ruth takes charge of her, and Vilcaroya and Hartness discuss the prospects of the coming war.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Twin-Star Sisters.

We saw nothing of Golden Star the next day, and but little of her for many days afterwards, for, in spite of our impatience, Ruth would not permit us to do so. What her brother had said had speedily proved itself to be true. She had come back to life a child-woman. Her body was that of a girl of seventeen years—which was her age when she and I had drunk the draught of the death-sleep together—and the kindly powers that had presided over her birth had shaped her in a mould of almost perfect womanly beauty, yet, as Djama had said, her mind was a virgin page from which the story of her past life had been utterly erased, and on whose blank whiteness the story of her new life had yet to be written. Now on the writing of the first words of this story, as Joyful Star told us in her sweetly serious way the night that she had sunk into her first natural slumber, everything might depend.

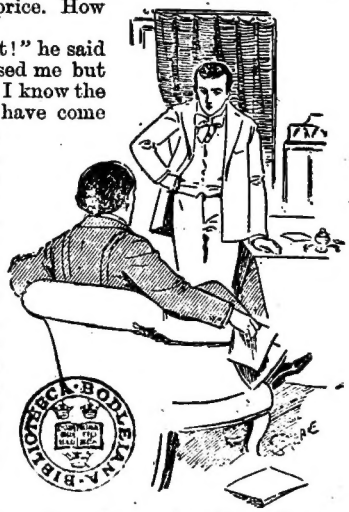
"It is a task," she said, "which I fear terribly to enter upon, and yet I know that I am the only one here who ought to undertake it. It will need weeks and months of the most careful watching, and the sympathy that only another woman and one who loves her as I have already learned to do could give her. No woman ever had such a task before, and very few have had so good a work to do. There is something, too"—and here I remember how subtle a change came into her voice as she said this—"there is something in this wonderful resemblance between us which tells me that this is my duty, and I am going to devote myself absolutely to it during every hour of her waking life until she is able to be without my care. I must watch her and care for her as a mother does for her child, and you must let me do it alone as long as I wish to, just as we had to let Laurens do his work alone. Don't you think I am right, Professor?"

"Yes," he answered, "perfectly right, Miss Ruth. I am sure everybody will agree with me that Her Highness could not be in better hands than yours. Indeed, as you say, yours are the only hands in which she could possibly be trusted with safety to her newly-awakening reason at such an extraordinary juncture in her life."

To this we all agreed willingly enough, and so Joyful Star had the big room cleared out and installed herself there with all the comforts and luxuries that the inexhaustible wealth which was now at my command could provide her with, so that Golden Star should find her new world as beautiful as might be. Meanwhile the Professor, with a trusty guide that I had provided him with from among my own people, plunged afresh into his beloved studies with such ardour that he seemed to have almost forgotten all else that had brought us to Peru. Francis Hartness had gone with Tupac—who, in the sight of the Spaniards, was only his Indian servant and guide—on a mission of importance to the South, where the first rumblings of the coming war-storm were already making themselves heard. As for Djama, who, as you know, had no more interest in the work that now lay before Francis Hartness and myself than the Professor had, he went about for some days gloomy and silent, and seemingly ill at ease, like a man who for a time has lost his interest in life, and at last, it was on the twentieth day after Golden Star had awakened, he came to me when I was alone in my room and said abruptly:

"Vilcaroya, do you think I have fairly earned my reward for what I have done?"

"Yes," I said, looking into his eyes and reading, though he knew it not, the thoughts that were moving in his mind. "You have done all that you promised to do, but we have yet said nothing of the price. How much do you ask for?"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Came to me when I was alone in my room.

"As much as I can get!" he said with a laugh that pleased me but little. "But, of course, I know the work that you yourself have come here to do, and I see that it will be expensive, so you will find me reasonable."

"And you, I hope, will not find me ungenerous. Do you remember what you saw in the Hall of Gold?" As I said this, his self-command left him for an instant. I saw his hands close, and his lips tremble, and the fierce fire of the gold-lust spring into his eyes. "Yes. How could I forget it?"

"And do you remember, too," I said, "the words that you heard me speak when I was sitting on the throne of Huayni-Capac?"

"Yes," he replied, with a faint blush coming into his pale cheeks. "It is not likely that I should forget them either. Why do you ask?"

"Because," I said, speaking slowly as a man who weighs his words well, "saving only the golden throne and the sacred emblems of the Sun, which it is not lawful for me to part with, all that you saw there

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shall belong to you and to him who made it possible for you to do what you have done. You will share it as you please, that is no care of mine, but I have conditions to make for my own sake and that of my people."

"What are they?" and as he spoke the flush died out of his cheeks again.

"That you shall both swear solemnly to me that, come what may, no man shall ever know from you where the gold came from, and that, moreover, you shall never utter any word of my story or Golden Star's where mortal ears can hear it, nor give any sign or word to any man or woman that shall lead him or her to guess that I am what I am, or that my work here is what it is. Swear that oath to me and you shall take your gold and go in peace. Break it and the fate that I told you of shall be yours. Are you content?"

"Yes," he said, "and more than content, and I swear to you most solemnly on my own honour, and by all that I hold sacred, that I will keep your secrets absolutely."

"No, not here," I said, interrupting him, "and, more, it is not only your oath that I want, and there must be witnesses, for this is too great a thing to do lightly. To-morrow night we will go back to the Hall of Gold, and there you shall swear your oaths and they shall be witnessed."

"Very well," he said. "Whenever and wherever you like. But now, Vilcaroya, I have something else to say to you. Personally, you know I have no further interests in Peru saving one only. Your next few years will be stormy ones, and though I believe that, with the power you have behind you, you will win in the end, yet you know as well as I do that you will have to run all the risks of a war that may be a very savage one before you succeed. You may restore the throne of the Incas, and reign upon it, or you may be killed in the first battle. You will pardon me speaking so plainly, won't you?"

I bowed my head in silence and he went on.

"In view of this, then, I am going to propose that when we leave Peru, I mean my sister and the Professor and myself, you will allow Ruth to take Golden Star to England with her, say, for three years or so, in order that her education may be carried on to the best advantage. I will promise you solemnly that during that time I will not speak a word of love to her or attempt to be anything else to her than I am to Ruth, and then if you succeed in your aims, as I hope you will, we will come back and be your Majesty's guests for a time, and after that we shall see what more the kindly Fates may have in store for you and me."

No man ever heard more fairly spoken or reasonable-sounding words than these were, and yet all the while I listened to them I knew that they were but used to hide the real thoughts of the man who was speaking them. Yet what could I answer him? Did they not seem to point out the best of all courses that could be followed for the welfare of Golden Star and the comfort of her whose gentle hand was leading her nearer every day to the fulfilment of the promise of her new life? So, for want of anything better in my mind, I answered:

"Your words are unwelcome to me, for so long a parting would be a great sorrow to me, yet they are wise, and that which is most pleasant is not always the best to be done. Let us talk of them again when the others are with us, and after to-morrow night's work is done."

"Very well," he said. "I fully understand you, so we won't say anything more about it until then. I suppose I may tell the Professor about what we are to do to-morrow night?"

"Yes," I said; "there will be no harm in that, since a share of the gold belongs to him as well."

"And Hartness?"

"He knows already, for I have told him not only of the treasures in the Hall of Gold, but of many others that will be used in the work that he has sworn to do with me."

Later on that day when the midday heat had cooled a little, I was walking alone in the garden of the hacienda, thinking deeply of what Djama had said and striving to find some plan of my own that would be as good and yet not make the parting that I dreaded needful. I turned, paying but little heed to my way, into a winding pathway shaded with trees and bordered with grass and flowers. I was looking down upon the ground as was my wont, when I heard footsteps near me and looked up. I had turned the bend in the path, and there, but a few paces from me, stood Golden Star and Ruth. I started and made a motion as though I would turn back, but Ruth immediately beckoned to me smilingly and said:

Ruth beckoned to me smilingly.

"Come and let me introduce you to your sister, Vilcaroya. I think it's time you began to be friends again. Don't you think she is looking wonderfully well and strong, and—and beautiful?"

You may think, but I cannot tell you, of all the feelings that rose up within me as I obeyed her invitation. It was the first time that I had seen Golden Star since the night that she had awakened. Nay, was it not the first time that I had seen her as a truly living woman since the night of our bridal in the Sanctuary? She was dressed in garments made after the fashion of Ruth's own, of light grey soft stuff, and on the glorious golden wealth of her hair was a broad-brimmed straw hat such as Ruth wore. Indeed, to look at them both, standing there side by side, they could but have been taken for two twin sisters, daughters of the Day and Night, as my loving fancy called them afterwards, rather than the daughters of different peoples, and children of far-parted generations, whose hands, as they clasped, bridged the gulf between one age of the world and another. As I approached, Golden Star's eyes looked at me with the simple wonder that looks out of the eyes of a little child, and like a little child she smiled at me, and then she looked at Ruth, and made a soft low sound that was almost like the cooing of a child.

"She is pleased to see you, Vilcaroya," said Ruth, taking hold of my hand and hers, "but of course she can't say so yet. Now, let me teach her to shake hands with you."

Then she put into mine the soft, warm, little hand that I had last clasped when we went hand in hand to the couch of our long sleep. I pressed it gently, looking at her through the tears that rose into my eyes, then I raised it to my lips and kissed it, and she smiled, and made the little soft sound again, and then Ruth put her arm round her waist and said:

"Come now, you are acquainted, and she likes you. This will be an invaluable lesson for her. Now, let us have a walk, and you tell me the news, if there is any."

"Most willingly," I said, "for I have much news to tell."

So we turned back along the path into the quietest part of the garden, I walking by Ruth's side. And I told her of all that had passed between her brother and me in the

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morning, and of what was to be done on the following night. She was looking very serious when I had finished, and I could see that many unspoken thoughts were working in her mind, and when I had done she looked up at me and said:

"Laurens' plan seems a very good one at first sight, but of course we cannot decide upon anything until we have thought a good deal more about it, and talked it well over amongst ourselves. But, at any rate, it would be several weeks yet before I would even think of going away with Golden Star, so there is plenty of time for that. But to-morrow night—Listen, Vilcaroya, may I ask a very great favour of you?"

"Joyful Star can ask nó favour of me," I said. "She can speak and I can hear and obey."

"Nonsense, Vilcaroya, I wish you wouldn't talk like that," she answered with pretty petulance. "Now, suppose I was to ask you to let me see this wonderful treasure-house of yours and promise faithfully not to tell anyone about it, would you let me?"

We saw Djama walking down the path towards us.

"It is not the best that I can show you," I answered gladly, "but if you desire to see it, it is yours and all that it contains. I can give your brother and the Professor other gold, and I will show you a greater treasure-house than this, under the Fortress itself."

"Well," she laughed. "I won't say now that I won't have it, because the sight of all that gold might be too much for me, but I should dearly love to come and see it, and I think I might venture to bring Golden Star, too. She's quite well and strong now, and if we are careful of her it can't do her any harm, and it may do her good. Shall I bring her?"

"Yes," I said, "why not?"

At this moment we saw Djama come walking down the path towards us, and at the sight of him there came to me, like the stab of a dagger of ice, the sudden memory that, at the moment I was speaking of my treasure-house under the Sacsahuaman, I had heard a gentle rustle behind some bushes close by the path, and a sound like that of a stealthy tread.

CHAPTER XX.

A Royal Wooing.

As Djama came near to us I saw the lovelight flash into his eyes and a swift flush rise into his sallow cheeks. He held out his hand and quickened his pace, smiling as sweetly as a woman the while. I was facing him a little in advance, and I heard behind me a sharp, low, shuddering cry of terror that shook my heart as I turned to learn its cause. Golden Star had thrown her arms round Ruth's neck, and was clinging to her, trembling with fear, and looking sideways at Djama with eyes fixed and wide open with terror.

You have seen how little children will go smiling and fearless into the arms of one stranger and shrink in hate and terror from another. Their sight is keener than it is in after years, when the dust of the world's conflict has dulled it, and they can see plainly the good and the evil that is hidden behind the mask of the face. So it was with that child-soul of Golden Star's. Though I was now to her as strange as Djama, yet she had seen in me only the friend and brother who loved her and wished her well, and whose heart was clean in her sight; but in Djama she had seen at a single glance the evil that had only been revealed to me after many weeks of watching.

Though I hated him for the fear that he had caused her, yet I was glad also, for now I saw that the answer to his proposal would be easier than I had thought for. As for him, his face darkened and his black brows came together in a straight line across his forehead, and the lovelight in his eyes changed to a glare of anger; but this was only for an instant. It passed more quickly than the thunder clouds melt round the crest of Illampu. He stopped, and stood with his head slightly bent and his hands spread palms outwards in the posture of one who asks pardon, and said, in a voice that had no trace of anger:

"Forgive me, Ruth! I am afraid I have startled our patient—or, perhaps, I should rather say, yours, now. It was something more than stupid of me to come upon you suddenly like this without any warning. Of all people in the world I ought to have known better than that. But I suppose seeing Vilcaroya already here made me forget myself. Did she start like that when he came?"

"No," replied Ruth, still standing with her arm where she had thrown it around Golden Star's shoulders, and stroking her hair with the other. "She—she saw him farther off than you, and I took her towards him, so I suppose the shock was not so great. But please go away, both of you, now. You see she is terribly frightened, and she is trembling as though someone had struck her. I must take her into the house and get her quiet again, or the consequences may be serious."

Djama turned away without a word, his face darkening again as he did so, and with one backward glance at Golden Star, who had now raised her head from Ruth's breast, and was staring after us with fixed, wide-open eyes, I turned and walked away beside him, neither of us speaking a word, for we were both too busy with our own thoughts.

That night Francis Hartness and Tupac returned from their journey to the south, and as the Professor was also in the house I told them of what I wished done on the following night, and bade Tupac make all preparation. The next day we all started in the cool of the morning to go to the Rodadero as though for a picnic, as the people of Cuzco often do, so that there might be no suspicion of our true object. We all rode upon horses, saving Golden Star, who was carried in a hammock-litter, that I had had made for her, and Tupac, and six of our people who came with us as bearers and servants. We spent the day wandering about among the mighty ruins of the Sacsahuaman, and exploring the wonders of the carved rocks and underground passages and altar-places, which have been the marvel of every traveller to the hills about Cuzco, and all that I knew of the upper works I told my companions, and showed them as well as I could what the mighty fastness had been in the days of its undimmed pride and unbroken strength.

Stood with his head slightly bent.

Then, when the brief twilight came, I bade one of our men take the beasts into a chamber among the rocks that I had shown him, and where plenty of fodder had been

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stored a few days before. After this we waited a little longer, till night fell, and then I bade Tupac do what I had bidden him the day before. His voice rose shrill and plaintive in the silence, chanting a song that you may have heard the Indians singing in Peru when returning from their labours, and presently from among the rocks, on the plain and from the shadowy lines of the fortress, many silent figures stole out and went towards the valley in which the Sayacusca stands.

Then I told my companions that all, save those of the Blood, must have their eyes bandaged, as Djama's had been before, and when they had submitted willingly to this, knowing, as they did, that no harm would come to them, we led them to the Sayacusca—I leading Ruth by the hand, and following the bearers of Golden Star's litter, and there the way to the Hall of Gold was opened as before, and we entered it, followed by a long line of the Children of the Blood.

But I made no halt here, nor did I let my companions even see the treasure that was to be divided between Djama and the Professor according to my promise, for I had greater marvels in store for them. So, lantern in hand, I led the way through a winding gallery behind the pyramid of gold of which I told you before. At the end of this was a door formed by a revolving stone similar to that at the entrance to the hall. This Tupac and another opened under my directions, and we entered a long straight passage behind it. At the end of this was a broad flight of stone steps, and at the top were two low bronze doors bolted into pillars on either side. The doors had no hinges, but they turned with the pillars, and no one who did not know this, or how the pillars turned, could open them. But this secret was one of many others that I had brought with me from the past, and in a few moments the doors were standing open before us.

We passed in, and I closed them behind us. Two of my men had come laden with great candles and torches, and these I had lit and placed in golden sconces which stood out from the walls in the great hall into which we had passed through the bronze doors. When this had been done I beckoned to Tupac, and went silently with him to the other end of the hall, where, on a throne of gold under a canopy of silver, sat a silent figure clad in the imperial robes. It was the effigy of the great Yupanqui, father of Huayni-Capac, which had been seated here since his death as an emblem of the unbroken sovereignty of his race, and giving place in turn to his son and grandson on the days that they were crowned, and being replaced when the ceremony was over.

Now with Tupac's help I carried the effigy into a little chamber behind the throne, and there quickly removed my upper clothing and dressed myself as I had done before in the Hall of Gold, and took my place on the throne. Then I bade Tupac lead Joyful Star, with her eyes still bandaged, to me. When he had placed her before me I made a sign to him, and the bandage fell from her eyes. She turned white as death, and staggered back a pace with her hands clasped to her temples, and there she stood staring wide-eyed at me and all the splendours about her.

We all rode upon horses.

Wherever her gaze wandered it saw nothing but gold and silver and gems and rich-dyed hangings of silk and wool, whose brilliant hues no time could dim. The roof and the upper halves of the walls were covered with plates of burnished silver; around the walls, half-way between the floor and the ceiling, ran a great cornice or ledge of gold, on which stood the golden chairs in which were seated the

With her hands clasped to her temples.

mummies of the twenty Incas which I had last seen in the Sanctuary of the Sun, looking down through the eye-holes in their golden masks.

From the cornice to the floor hung the bright-hued hangings, and against these were ranged along the floor on either side three score seats of silver, and the floor was paved with diamond shaped blocks of gold and silver set alternately. Behind the throne on which I sat rose from floor to roof a sloping wall of golden ingots and on either hand stood a great golden vase, heaped high with uncut gems, emeralds, and diamonds, sapphires, and rubies, precious almost beyond price, and on the roof above my throne a great golden image of the Sun, encircled by spreading rays of gems, glowed and sparkled in the light of the candles and torches.

At last Ruth's wandering gaze became steady and rested upon my face, and I looked back into her eyes, making no sign until she should speak, and sitting motionless as the effigy whose place I had taken.

"Where am I?" she said at last in a low, faint voice, like one awakening from a dream. "And who are you? Surely you cannot be—and yet, yes, you are Vilcaroya! What has happened?"

"Nothing more than the granting of Joyful Star's request, save that through the treasure-house which she asked to see I have brought her to a better one. Does it please her?"

"Is it real, Vilcaroya?" she whispered. "Is all this really gold and silver, and are these real diamonds and rubies and emeralds, or am I only dreaming? Does it please me? What a question! I have never even dreamed of anything like it. Where are we, Vilcaroya?"

"In the throne-room of the Incas, beneath what was once their palace and fortress on the hill of Sacsahuaman," I answered, "and this is the throne of the great Yupanqui, the greatest earthly king and conqueror of my race. I sat

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here and crowned myself Inca in the presence of Anda-Huillac and the priests and nobles of the Land of the Four Regions on the day before the night when I drank the death-draught with Golden Star."

"Ah, yes, where is she?" she cried, looking round only to see that all the rest had vanished, and she and I were alone in the great hall. "What have they done with her, and where are Laurens and the others?" she cried, looking fearfully and almost mistrustingly at me. "What have you done with them, Vilcaroya?"

"They are safe," I said. "Tupac and his men have care of them, and they will come back when I bid him bring them, but I have need of your presence here alone before I do that," I said, rising from my seat as I spoke. "Has Joyful Star ever sat on a throne?"

"No," she stammered, staring at me with wonder in her eyes. "You know I haven't. Why should you ask?"

"Then sit in mine," I said, "for I have something to say to you which I can best say and you can best hear if we change places. Nay, I will take no denial," I said, drawing her by the hand up the steps in front of the throne, "for it is not only your—your friend who is asking, but a crowned king in his own palace, who is lord of life and death over all who enter it."

Half frightened and half wondering, she submitted to my will and allowed me to seat her in the chair in which no woman had ever sat before. Then I took her hand, and, dropping on one knee on the upper step, I said:

"Joyful Star has taken one queen from me, and she alone can give me another to fill her place. She is sitting where the great Yupanqui sat when he ruled all the land from north to south and from the eastern mountains to the sea, and, ere long, I, too, shall reign, sole and undisputed lord, over a realm wider even than that. Many things have been done that Joyful Star knows not of since I came back to my country and my people. Through all the Land of the Four Regions the word has gone forth with the swiftness of thought that the Son of the Sun has returned, and that the heir of the divine Manco has come to deliver his children from bondage.*

"Everywhere the tidings have been received with joy, and the people are longing to return to the allegiance of their fathers, and tread their oppressors under foot. Before many days civil war will be raging throughout the lands of the south, and I have but to set flowing that golden stream, one of whose many sources is here, and say: 'Here is gold and silver in plenty for all who will fight under the Rainbow Banner,' and I shall have armies and fleets to do what I will with, and the sway of my sceptre shall reach from north to south and sea to sea.

"This I shall do because of my oath, but I have brought Joyful Star here to tell her, in the most sacred place that is left in the Land of the Four Regions, that I shall also do it so that she, if she will, may be queen where I am king, and sit beside me on my throne, and make my empire a paradise by the brightness and the sweetness of her presence. I cannot forget, as she bade me do, for the words that I said in the heat of my passion are true—for I love you, Joyful Star, and all that I have or shall ever have on earth can have no worth for me unless you take it as a gift from my hands. Nay, do not speak, for now I seek no answer, whether good or evil. I have brought you here that I, as a king, might kneel at the feet of her whom I would win for my queen, and from now until I sit in the sight of all the world on the throne of the Four Regions, no other words of love shall pass my lips. So you shall have many days to ponder what I have said, and to ask your own heart whether it will say 'yes' or 'no' to me when I stretch out my hand from my throne and ask you to come and sit beside me and rule my people with me."

Before she could answer I stood up and clapped my hands, and Tupac with six others, dressed now in the forbidden costume of their ancestors, entered the hall from the ante-chamber, into which they had taken the others, and came towards me bearing wands across their shoulders in token of homage, and with heads downbent, not daring to look upon my majesty till I bade them. I drew Joyful Star from the throne by the hand, and seating myself in it, said in the ancient tongue:

"Let the Children of the Blood enter into the presence of their father and their lord, and let the strangers be brought in and the other maiden, all with eyes bandaged, and let seats of silver be placed to the right and left of the throne, one for each of the Virgins of the Sun to sit upon. Are all things else ready, Tupac-Rayca?"

"Yes, lord," he answered, stepping out in front of the others and falling on his knees, "and the Children of the Blood are waiting to see the glory of thy presence and hear the words of wisdom and hope from thy lips."

(To be continued.)

*The Inca Indians of the Sierra region possess the same extraordinary faculty of transmitting intelligence without apparent material means that the Hindoos and the Arabs have. Thus, during the recent revolution in Peru, the fall of Lima was known to the Indians of Bolivia on the Southern shore of Lake Titicaca three days after it happened, though the telegraph wires were cut and all ordinary communications suspended. Without the telegraph this would be quite impossible by any means known to Europeans.

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A FRIENDLY GAME

At the close of a short winter's day in the year 1649 a solitary horseman jogged along across Hounslow Heath, the reins of the well-bred mare he bestrode hanging carelessly on her neck. They understood each other well, these two, and it would have needed but a word and a touch of the rein or the slightest pressure of her rider's heel to cause her to stop motionless as a statue, or to break into a swinging gallop which would soon put a good many miles between her and any one that might attempt to follow, as she had more than once proved to her owner's entire satisfaction.

She was, in fact, possessed of a remarkably fine turn of speed, and when to this was added an almost human intelligence it is not to be wondered at that between her owner—a gentleman of the road—and herself there existed a very close bond of affection.

"The rascal must have misled me, I suppose, and her ladyship's coach has gone by," was the man's comment, as after waiting for more than an hour in the shade of some pine trees on the edge of the heath his vigil had not been rewarded as he had hoped it would have been by the sound of rumbling wheels denoting the approach of a posting vehicle, such as the quality were wont to travel in in the days when Cromwell's soldiers were considerably in evidence all over the country. This fact was well known to the bold highwayman, who, from his invariable courtesy to those with whom he had "business" relations, had earned the soubriquet of Gentleman Dick, and it is with him that this story has to do.

As he left the confines of the heath and made his way towards Staines, he was careful to see that the priming of his pistols was right, and he kept a watchful eye for any unwelcome individual that might be about.

As good luck would have it, he was not accosted until he had reached his destination, an old-fashioned hostelry on the outskirts of the town, with a considerable range of stabling attached. The mare evidently knew her way, and having halted of her own accord outside a comfortable loose box, her rider quickly dismounted and led her in; and then, with the bit out of her mouth but with the bridle left on, so as to be ready for an emergency, she was soon busily feeding out of a well-filled manger, which seemed to imply that her advent was not altogether unexpected by the owner of the establishment.

Having seen to her wants, Gentleman Dick did not, as might have been expected, boldly swagger up to the front door, but contented himself by entering the house from the back, and, saluting the landlord in a familar way, asked who was about.

"Only a couple of parsons, in there," jerking his thumb in the direction of the inn parlour. "They came in an hour ago, and from the look of their nags they have come a goodish way."

Gentleman Dick made a wry face; members of the cassock fraternity were not much in his line.

"They've as pretty a pair of nags as you'd see in a day's journey," was the landlord's remark.

"Come now, that's something," was the reply. "Oh, landlord, bring me in a bottle of your best," he said aloud, as he opened the parlour door and walked in.

The room was a blaze of light, as in addition to a goodly array of candles there was a roaring wood fire on the hearth, and standing with their backs thereto were two men, both dressed alike in the garb of Presbyterian ministers, but otherwise presenting a marked contrast to each other, the one being tall and spare with a white flowing beard, the other not much more than a boy, with a clean shaven face and a prematurely bald head.

Gentleman Dick had ever been noted for his courtesy to all he met, and it was with the best bow that he could command that he saluted the two men, and remarked that it was a lonesome neighbourhood, and they had done well to put up for the night, instead of pushing on to Windsor. That this should have been their destination was of course purely imaginary on his part, but he liked, as he always said, to know as much as possible.

"We have travelled far to-day, my son and I, sir," with a glance at the younger man, "and our nags, although good animals, are tired, otherwise we should have pressed onwards, late as the hour is."

"Have you no fear of highwaymen?"

"Our trust is in the Lord, and we have never yet been

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overcome by one of his enemies, either mounted or afoot."

"Well spoken, sir, but maybe you have never met with a man of much determination. They say Gentleman Dick, the highwayman, of whom you may have heard, is on the road in these parts, and he is no respecter of persons, I have heard."

Whilst he had been speaking he had been divesting himself of his sword and pistols, laying the latter down on the table before him so as to have them near at hand. As he did so his eye fell upon the travellers' saddles and riding-cloaks, out of the pocket of one of which protruded the butt-end of a pistol.

"You carry arms, I observe," he remarked with a smile.

"We do, sir. In these troublous times it is well to be prepared; but by the Lord's help I trust neither my son nor I may ever have need to use them, unless it be that the enemy seem bent on our destruction."

"A godly sentiment, which does you credit, sir. Ha! that's better, landlord," as the latter appeared with the wine.

"Now, gentlemen, you'll do me the honour of drinking with me."

The elder man seemed inclined to refused the invitation; but the younger one showed unmistakable signs of satisfaction at the proffered hospitality, and his scruples, if any, vanished.

"We are not much given to wine drinking, sir; but since you are good enough to invite us to share your liquor, it would be churlish to refuse. I am not much in love with it myself, but my son likes a glass in moderation."

"That's better. Here's to the King! God bless him!"

If there had been any signs of diffidence on the parsons' part hitherto, they speedily vanished under the cheering influence of the bottle, and the elder man became quite garrulous by the time a second one had made its appearance, and, from what he let drop, it appeared they had come from the South of England.

"Now, gentlemen, what do you say to a game of cards? I'm in the humour for it, and you won't baulk me of my pleasure, I hope," at the same time carelessly fingering one of the pistols before him.

"In truth, sir, it's not lack of will on my part, but of knowledge, believe me—I know not one card from another. Such diversions were not held to be lawful for men of my calling in my younger days, and, in faith, as the strength of the wine seems to have got into my head, not being accustomed thereto, I will, with your permission, snatch a hasty repose;" and he prepared to make himself comfortable on the settle.

"So be it, sir, then; but surely your son will not deprive me of an hour's amusement? 'Tis not long, I take it, since you left college, young sir, and whatever it may have been in your father's time, card-playing is not considered a venial offence nowadays, I'm thinking."

"Indeed, sir, and nothing would please me more than to give you a game, poor player that I am; but I passed my word to my father, when I left college awhile ago, never to touch a card again, and I have kept my word so far."

The old man, who had apparently dozed off, woke up at the sound of his name.

"What the lad says is true enough, sir, but in return for your kindness I will withdraw my injunction for this one occasion; but one thing I would ask of you, and that is to let your stakes be moderate, as becomes our position. You, sir, will, I know, pardon me, for we are but poor men, and cannot afford to wager highly. You will find a bag with some few gold pieces in my saddle-bag, Joseph——"

"Far be it from me, sir, to encourage the vice of gambling, and we will confine ourselves to modest stakes—just enough to give an interest to the game," at the same time cocking the two pistols that lay convenient to his hand. The old man gave a start at the ominous sound, and his son did not seem to be altogether at ease, to judge by the expression of his face.

"Let us have a clean pack, landlord, and bring in another bottle."

"Your deal, young sir," as, handing the cards to his opponent, he took a copious draught of wine, his left hand at the same moment toying with one of his pistols, as if mechanically.

The old gentleman seated on the settle at the back of the highwayman was already snoring placidly, and, noticing it, the son, after looking towards him to make sure, suggested in a low tone that they might as well play for a gold piece a time, adding that if he lost many he would have to leave off playing.

"With all my heart, and I hope fortune may smile upon you; you won't find me a bad loser."

For a time the game went evenly enough, first one and then the other gaining a slight advantage, until at length the young parson, who had evidently acquired confidence, and handled his cards with more dexterity as the time went on, suggested—somewhat eagerly, as it appeared to Gentleman Dick—that they should double the stakes.

"With all my heart, young sir," was the hearty response.

For a while the game went all against the younger man, and then, as will sometimes happen, the luck suddenly changed, and the heap of gold pieces in front of Master Joseph assumed goodly proportions. Still the highwayman continued to play his game in his usual easy-going style. Whereas it was noticeable, or would have been had there been anybody to see it, that his opponent took considerable pains and deliberation as to how he played his cards.

Indeed, on one occasion, after he had been nursing his clean-shaved chin with his left hand, after the manner of some players when in doubt, he looked across the table and caught Gentleman Dick's eye fixed upon him in a way he did not like apparently, as he speedily played a card which, as it happened, lost him the game. Almost at the same moment it certainly seemed as if the old gentleman asleep on the settle momentarily opened one eye: but so swiftly was it done that it would have been impossible to say with certainty.

"What say you, sir, will you double the stakes again?" The suggestion emanated from the highwayman this time, and as he made it he moved his position slightly—possibly he felt the fire too much at his back—the result being that he was able to simultaneously keep an eye on his opponent and the old parson on the settle.

"Another bottle, landlord—and you might throw a log or two on the fire at the same time."

Presently the landlord returned with the wine, and was in the act of replenishing the fire, when——

"No, you don't," shouted the highwayman, at the same time covering his opponent with one pistol, and the old sleeping clergyman with the other. For a man who had been snoring a moment before, the alacrity with which the latter sat bolt upright was something marvellous. At the same time his hand

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reached forward for his pistol. "Move hand or foot and I fire, you understand. Now, landlord, just take their pistols and hand up those saddle-bags. Parsons who can stake five and ten gold pieces a time can't be so very hard up. Unless I'm much mistaken, you're nothing better than a pair of rascally card-sharpers, and no more parsons than your humble servant. Gentleman Dick."

"Confound me if I didn't think as much!" muttered the elder man, with a scowl of rage; "but the young fool thought he knew better than I did."

"Confound yourself, you old idiot! Didn't you give me the word yourself?"

"You're right, let's say no more, it's no use arguing; besides, we're all of a kidney, after all."

"You'll pardon me, but I don't go in for card-sharping—I'm on the road like a gentleman should be, and what I do is fair, square, and above board. Parsons, too! A nice state of things it has come to; we shall have a judge in his carriage doing the heath next, I suppose!"

"It ain't such a bad game for a change, I can tell you; things were getting a bit too hot for us round town, and so we rigged ourselves like this, and went down Exeter way for a change, but I have had pretty near enough of it, I can tell you. The living is right enough, best of everything, and plenty of it, but you must forswear liquor like poison, and it was not being used to it that spoilt the game to-night. We have not had what you may call a fill of liquor since we've been on the lay, and when you asked us to crack a bottle it was a Godsend. We made a good haul, though, a day or two ago, and were going to return to the road again, like yourself. We've had enough of this philandering. See, now you've caught us fair and square, let's share out our lot—and it's a tidy bit, I can tell you—and cry quits."

"I'm not used to consort with low blackguards of your class, and if that fool of a son of yours—son, indeed!—hadn't been clumsy enough to try and cheat me—in my own house, too, egad!—you might have got clear away, for nobody can ever say that Gentleman Dick ever did a dirty action yet; and if he had won my money fair and square he should have been welcome to it, but to try and cheat me, and in such a clumsy way, too—bah! you aren't fit to be on the road either. Footpad work is more in your line, I'm thinking. Now then, just stand up in that corner, and if you move so much as a finger, either of you, I'll shoot you down where you stand."

"Now, landlord, open those bags out."

The landlord willingly did as he was bid, and speedily brought to light a miscellaneous collection of personal effects in the way of clothing, wigs, etc., and finally two leather bags, the one filled with broad gold pieces, and the other containing a valuable assortment of jewellery.

The two men looked sullenly on, realising the game was up, neither saying a word.

"And where did you make this haul, sirrah?"

"It was all along of a marrying job. Ha, ha!" with an attempt to pass it off lightly; but the laugh died away on seeing the look of disgust on the highwayman's face.

"A rich squire's daughter was be married to an Exeter merchant, and as my son and I were to perform the cermony, who so fit as we to escort her and her fat old mother into——"

"You mean hounds!" thundered Gentleman Dick, "and you took advantage of your position to rob two defenceless ladies. Take off every garment you have got on your degraded carcases." The men silently obeyed. "And now that flowing beard and both your wigs. A nice-looking pair of rascals, on my conscience!" And truth to say, the transformation revealed as evil-looking, hang-dog a pair of individuals as one would meet in a day's journey.

"Make a bonfire of that toggery, landlord—at any rate the road will be safe for a time from any such canting humbugs as parsons in disguise—and now put all that stuff in my saddle-bags. Share, indeed! not a stiver will you have, and you may think yourselves lucky to get off with whole skins. And now, tell me, where does this lady live? I shall make it my duty to restore her personal property to her without delay, and if I find you used any violence——"

"No, no," whined the elder man, who had been the spokesman throughout; "you couldn't have done it more tenderly yourself."

"You may thank your lucky stars for that."

The landlord reappeared with the announcement the mare was ready, and anxiously asked: "What about these rogues' nags? They're a pair of good 'uns."

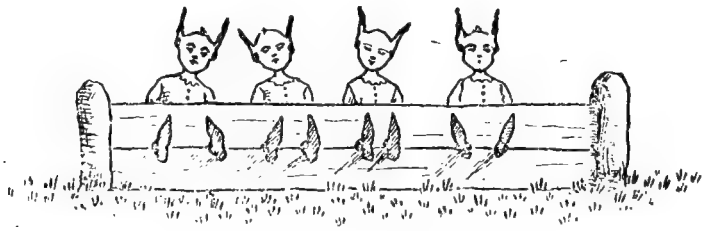
"Keep 'em, they'll pay for their score; and padding the hoof is more in their line, I'm thinking, than horseback."

"Now, remember, when a gentleman asks you to play a friendly game of cards, it is as well not to be too clever."

A minute later the clattering hoofs of the black mare announced his departure.

A day or two later the squire's daughter duly received back her jewellery, with a courteous expression of regret at being obliged to retain the coin for personal expenditure.

S. J. F. Newbery.



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LEGENDS OF WOLFVILLE.

BY "DAN QUINN."

Wolfville is a Cattleman's Settlement in Arizona, and the Characters in these Legends are Cowboys.

No. 2.—Crawfish Jim.

"Did I ever tell you the story of the death of Crawfish Jim?"

The old cattleman bent upon me an eye of benevolent inquiry. I assured him that thus far the details of the taking off of Crawfish Jim had been as a sealed book to me. But I would gladly listen.

"What's the matter with laying bare the fate of Crawfish Jim right now?" I asked, falling somewhat into my old companion's style to please him.

"Nuthin' the matter," rejoined the old cattleman, "nuthin' whatever. It was this way: Crawfish Jim was a sheepman, and had a camp in the foothills o' the Tres Hermanas—mebbe thirty miles back from Wolfville. This yere Crawfish Jim was a peculiar person; plumb locoed, like all sheepmen. They has to be crazy or they wouldn't pester 'round in no sech disrepootable pursoots as sheep.

"You've seen these yere men as makes pets of snakes Mebbe it's one in a thousand times you tracks up on sech a man. Snakes is kittens to him, an' he's likely to be packin' a few specimens 'round in his clothes any time.

"Well, that's the way with this yere Crawfish Jim. I minds talkin' to him at his camp one day when I was huntin' a bunch o' cattle. The first I notices a snake sticks its head outen Crawfish's shirt, an' looks at me malevolent an' distroostful. Another sticks its nose out up by Crawfish's collar.

"'Which you shore seems ha'nted by snakes,' I says, steppin' back an' p'intin' at the reptiles.

"'Them's my dumb companions,' says Crawfish Jim. 'They shares my solitoode an' loves me.'

"'You do seem some pop'lar with 'em,' I observes, for I notes at once he's clean off his mental reservation; an' when a man's locoed it makes him hostile if you deride his little game or buck his notions.

"I takes dinner with Crawfish Jim that same day; pretty good grub, too; mainly sheep-meat, salt hoss, an' bakin'-powder biscuit. I watches him some narrow about these snakes he's 'fested with; I loathed o' 'em nacheral, an' not wantin' 'em to transfer no love to me, an' go to enlivening my solitoode. Well, son, this yere Crawfish Jim is same as a den of sarpents. I reckons now he has a plumb dozen stowed away in his raiment. Thar was no harm in 'em; bein' all bull-snakes, which is innocuous an' without p'isen, fangs, or convictions.

"When Crawfish gets ready to bile coffee he tumbles the biggest bull-snake I'd seen yet outen the coffee-pot on to the grass. Then he fills the kittle up with water, dumps in the coffee, an' sets her on the coals to stew.

"'This yere particular snake,' says Crawfish, 'which, by the way, I calls him Julius Cæsar, is too big to to't 'round in my shirt, an' so he lives in the coffee-pot while I'm away, and keeps camp for me.'

"'Don't you have no rattlesnakes to fondle some?' I inquires, jest to see what card he'd play.

"'No,' he says, 'rattlesnakes is all right — good, sociable, moral snakes enough—but they may bite you in jokes, or something like that, an' thar you be. No; bull snakes is as 'fectionate as rattlers, an' don't run to p'isen. You don't have no accidents with 'em.'

"'Can't you burst the fangs outen rattlesnakes?' I says.

"'They grows right in again,' says Crawfish, 'same as your finger nails. I ain't got no time to go through a rattlesnake's mouth every day lookin' up teeth, so I don't worry none with 'em, but jest plays bull-snakes straight. This yere bein' dentist for rattlesnakes has risks, which the same would be foolish to assoom.'

"While grub's cookin' an' Crawfish an' me's pow-wowin', a little old dog Crawfish has—one of these yere no-account office dogs—comes up an' makes a small uprisin' off to one side with Julius Cæsar. The dog yelps an' snaps, an' Julius Cæsar blows an' strikes at him, same as a rattlesnake. However, they ain't doin' no harm, an' Crawfish don't pay no heed.

"'They're jest runnin' blazers on each other,' says Crawfish, 'an' don't mean nothin'. Bimeby Caribou Jim, which the same is the dog, 'll go lie down an' sleep; an' Julius will quile up agin' him to be warm. Caribou Jim bein' a dog that way, is a warm-blood animal, while pore Julius has got cold blood like a fish. So he goes over an' camps on Caribou, an' all the same puts his feet on him for to be comfortable.'

"Of course, I'm a heap interested in this yere snake knowledge, an' tells Crawfish so. But it sorter gets my appetite, an' Crawfish saves on sheep-meat an' salt hoss by his discourse powerful. Thinkin' an' a-lookin' at them blessed snakes—especial at Julius Cæsar—I shore ain't hungry much. But, as you says, how about Crawfish Jim's getting killed?

"One day Crawfish allows all alone by himse'f he'll hop into Wolfville an' buy some stuff for his camp—flour, whiskey, tebacker, airtights, an' sech. What's airtights? Which your Eastern folks is shore ignorant. Airtights is can peaches, can tomatters, an' similar bluffs.

"Well, as I'm sayin', 'long comes pore old Crawfish over to Wolfville; rides in on a burro. That's right, son; comes loafin' 'long on a burro. These yere sheepmen is that abandoned and vulgar they ain't got pride to ride a hoss. 'Long comes Crawfish on a burro. An' it's his first visit to Wolfville. Heretofore the old

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Cimmaron goes over to Red Dog for his plunder, the same bein' a low-down camp on the Lordsburg trail, which allows it's a rival to Wolfville. It ain't, however, the same, not bein' of the same commercial importance as a prairie-dog town.

"This yere time Crawfish p'ints up for Wolfville. An' to make himse'f loved, I reckon, whatever does this yere old Big horn do but bring 'long Julius Cæsar?

"I don't reckon now he'd ever played Julius Caesar none on Red Dog. Mighty likely this was the bull-snake's first engagement. I clings to this notion that Red Dog never see Julius Cæsar, for if she had them drunkards which inhabit said camp wouldn't have quit yellin' yet. Which Julius Cæsar with that Red Dog whiskey they was soaked in would have shore given strange visions. Fact is, Crawfish told Jack Moore later he never took Julius Cæsar nowhar before.

"But all the same Crawfish prances into camp on this yere occasion with Julius Cæsar bushwhacked 'way 'round back in his shirt, an' sech vacant spaces about his person as ain't otherwise 'gaged a-nourishin' of minor bull-snake's plenty profuse. Of course these snakes is all holdin' back, bein', after all, timid cattle, an' so none of us suspects Crawfish is packin' any sech surprises. None of the boys 'bout town knows o' Crawfish havin' this bull-snake habit but me, nohow. So the old man stampedes 'round an' buys what he's arter, an' all goes well. Nobody ain't even dreamin' of reptiles.

"At last Crawfish, havin' turned his little game for flour, airtights, an' jug-juice, as I says, gets into the Red Light saloon, an' braces up ag'in the bar an' calls for p'ints all 'round. This yere is only proper an' p'lite, an' everybody within hearin' o' the yell lines up.

"It's at this yere crisis Crawfish Jim starts in to make himse'f a gineral fav'rite. Everybody's slopped out his perfoomery, an' Dan Boggs is jest sayin':

"'Yere's lookin' at ye, Crawfish.'

"Then that crazy-hos sheper' sorter swarms 'round inside his shirt with his hand for a moment, an' then lugs out Julius Cæsar by the scruff o' his neck, a-squirmin' an' a-blowin', and madder'n a drunken squaw. Once he gets Julius out, he lays him on the Red Light bar an' sorter herds him 'round with his hand to keep Julius from chargin' off among the bottles.

"'Gents,' says this yere locoed Crawfish, 'I ain't no boaster, but I offers 100 to 50, an' make it up to 1,000 dollars in wool or sheep, Julius Cæsar is the fattest an' finest sarpent in Arizona; also the best behaved.'

"There warn't no one takin' Crawfish's bet. The moment he slams Julius Cæsar on the bar, more'n ten of our leadin' citizens falls to the floor in fits, an' simply emerges outen one par'xism to slump into another. Which we shorely had a gineral round of all sorts of spells.

"'Whativer's the matter of you-all people?' says Crawfish, lookin' some aghast. 'Thar's no more harm in Julius Cæsar than if he was a full blown rose.'

"Jack Moore being marshal, o' course, stands his hand. It's his official dooty to play a pat hand on bull-snakes an' danger in any form. An' Jack does it. While Crawfish is busy recountin' the virtues of Julius Cæsar, a-holdin' of his pet with one hand, Jack Moore takes a snap-shot at him along the bar with his six-shooter, an' away goes Julius Cæsar's head like a puff of smoke. Then Moore rounds up Crawfish, an' perceivin' of the other bull-snakes, he searches 'em out one by one an' massacres 'em.

"'Call over Doctor Peets,' says Jack Moore final, 'an' bring Boggs an' Tutt, an' the rest of these yere invalids to.'

"Doc. Peets an' Enright both trails in on the lope from the store. They hears Moore's gun play, an' is curious, nacheral enough, to know who calls it. Well, they turns in an' brings the other inhabitants outen their fits; pendin' which Moore goes on an' kills off the last remainin' bull-snake in Crawfish's herd.

"Son, I've seen people mad, an' I've seen 'em sorry, an' I've seen 'em bit by grief. But I'm yere to remark I never runs up on a fellow bein' who goes plum mad with sadness until I sees Crawfish that day Jack Moore immolates his bull-snake pets. He stands thar white an' ain't sayin' a word. Looks for a minute like he can't move. Crawfish don't pack no gun, or I allers reckoned we'd heard of him while them bull-snakes was cashin' in.

"But at last he sorter comes to, an' walks out without sayin' nothin'. They ain't none of us noticin' o' him much at the time, bein' busy recoverin' from the gineral shock with whiskey.

"Now, what do you s'pose this yere old Navajo does? Lopes straight over to th' store—is ca'm as a June day about it, too—an' buys a six-shooter.

"The next notice we gets of Crawfish, bang goes his new gun, an' the bullet cuts along Jack Moore's head about two feet too high for results. New gun that away; an' Crawfish not up on his practice; o' course, he overshoots.

"Well, the poor old murderer never gets a second shot. I reckon eight men shot all at once, an' Crawfish Jim quits this earthly deal unanimous. He stops every bullet, eight of 'em, like I says.

"Thar wasn't a man of us don't feel regrets; but what's the use? Thar we was up against a deal with Crawfish clean locoed, an' thar wasn't no other waggon track out.

"'I shore hope he's on the hot trail of them bull-snakes of his'n,' says Dan Boggs, as we lays Crawfish out on a card table. 'Seems like he thought monstrous of 'em. An' it would mighty likely please him to run up on 'em whar he's gone.'

"Whatever did we do? Why, we digs a grave out back of the dance hall, an' plants tharein Crawfish an' his pets.

"'I reckon we'd better bury the reptiles, too,' says Doc. Peets, jest as we got Crawfish stretched out all comfortable in the bottom. 'If he's lookin' down on these obsequies it'll make him feel easier.' Doc. Peets was mighty pensive an' sentimental an' romantic that away, an' allers thinks of sech like touchin' things to do.

"We counted in the snakes. There was eleven of 'em besides Julius Cæsar, which we lays him on Crawfish's breast. You can go to Wolfville an' find the grave to-day. Shore! we sticks up a headboard. It says on it, the same bein' furnished by Doc. Peets—an' I wants to say Doc. Peets was the best eddicated man in Arizona—as follows:

"'Sacred to the Memory of
CRAWFISH JIM, JULIUS CÆSAR,
and
Eleven other Bull-Snakes.
They Meant Well,
But they Misunderstood Existence and Died.
This Board was Reared by an
Admiring Circle of Friends,
Who was with Deceased to the Last.'"

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A Daughter of Corsica

The two men sprang simultaneously to their feet.

"You are a liar!"

"A what, sir?"

"A liar!"

"Then take that," and the young Englishman accompanied his words with a blow that sent the Corsican reeling backwards.

Gill Jackson was the son of a wealthy English merchant who had died three months before, leaving the whole of his property to his only child, a young man of twenty-five, who had chosen perhaps the most pleasurable method of killing time by starting on a journey round the world.

From Paris, of which he had tired in a week, he proceeded to Marseilles, and from there to Corsica.

And so, a month after leaving his home, Gill found himself gazing upon the citron and orange groves of the Campoloro, and listening to the dull, monotonous roar of the Govona torrent.

Of the natural beauties of the island, however, he soon grew weary, and the brilliantly lighted casinos of the town attracted him far more than the sweet-smiling chestnut woods which covered the lower slopes of the Monte del Oro.

At Ajaccio he fell in with a young American, a Daniel Freemore, who, too, was engaged in killing time by the same means as himself.

Jackson and Freemore saw a great deal of one another, and one evening, over a glass of absinthe, the latter waxed confidential to such a degree that he imparted to the young Englishman full particulars concerning his love affairs.

He was deeply in love with a young Corsican maiden, he explained; but unfortunately the parents and brother of the girl were most strongly adverse to the union.

The lady was of a family in whose veins ran the blood of the house of Leubo, a noble family of long standing regarded with profound respect and esteem by every one.

Marina's parents he had but seldom seen. He was an American, and his very presence was objectionable to them. Her brother he had never had an opportunity of meeting.

Although the girl loved him, she dared not disgrace the name of her noble family by accompanying him to America in opposition to the commands of her parents.

And so Freeman came to Jackson for advice, and the young Englishman gave it as his opinion that the best course to pursue would be for the ardent lover to journey to the girl's parents, who lived a few miles from the town, boldly telling them that, if they refused to allow the marriage to take place, he would carry off their daughter.

This advice Daniel thought reasonable, and so the following day he left the town.

The same night that he set out Gill entered one of the numerous cafés which abound in the streets of Ajaccio, and threw himself into a lounge at a vacant table.

Shortly after, a young Corsican, dressed in the uniform of a French naval officer, entered the room, and sat on the opposite side of the table.

Cheroots were exchanged, and the topics of the day freely discussed between the two men, who, until this moment, had been unknown to one another.

From one subject to another the conversation passed, until the momentous question of the relative strengths of the British and French navies arose.

Scarcely five minutes elapsed before the two men were engaged in hot dispute, which resulted in the Corsican calling the Englishman a liar, and the next instant finding himself rolling on the ground.

The café was crowded, and further trouble prevented. But before leaving the room, a meeting was arranged between the two men.

Preliminary arrangements were made for the duel by the Corsican's seconds and Daniel Freemore, who had returned elated with success, only to find his acquaintance preparing to engage in a duel.

The action was to take place in an open part of the beautiful woods of Monte del Oro, half a mile from the town.

Until the moment when the company met, Freemore had not seen his principal's adversary, nor had he taken any particular notice of his name.

Now, however, as he stood close to the Corsican, the latter's features appeared familiar to him. Gradually it dawned upon him that the young officer remarkably resembled the fair Marina both in face and voice.

In a moment he called to mind the name of this man. It was Matteo Leubo, his betrothed's brother!

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The men are in their places. The American is dazed. He cannot see. He would avert the duel, but it is an affair of honour. A cloud passes over his eyes, and he leans against a tree for support. Then the reports of the pistols ring out simultaneously.

The Englishman staggers; the Corsican falls.

Gill Jackson has received a flesh wound in the arm; but Matteo is dead!

* * * * * *

Nearly a twelvemonth elapsed, and Gill Jackson, having continued his tour, found himself in due course travelling through the States.

During his journey he fell desperately in love with a beautiful creole, who with her parents resided in Louisiana.

The father of this lovely girl, Michael Poindexter, at once favourably impressed by the bearing of this handsome young Englishman, did all in his power to favour the suit, with the result that before many weeks had passed Gill Jackson and the fair Louise were engaged.

Scarcely, however, had their future happiness been assured than dark rumours filled the air of the coming strife between North and South.

The black and gloomy storm-cloud, which had been gathering in strength and density for several months, burst suddenly over the heads of the thousands who fell in the deadly struggle which followed.

The Federal troops were quickly mobilised, and the Southern planter dropped his lash and handled his trusty rifle, while he gathered in his retainers, and barricaded the old home in preparation for the deadly fight around it which he too fully anticipated must sooner or later take place.

And so Gill Jackson joined the ranks of the confederates, and bidding adieu to his betrothed, advanced to repel the men whom he had learned during his stay in the South to thoroughly despise and hate.

Naturally, it was no patriotic motive that led him to take up arms; it was simply and solely because Louise had wished it.

A fortnight elapsed, and at the end of that time Gill found himself encamped with his regiment half a mile from a spot on which a little later took place one of the most bloody and desperate engagements that occurred during the whole of this wretched campaign.

Two nights before the battle, Gill paced up and down a grassy slope on sentry-go. The night was raw and cheerless, and the drizzly rain which fell made the duty of those on guard one of the most arduous.

In the distance out before him over the plain the bivouac fires of the Federal troops twinkled and glistened in the darkness, while in his rear lay the camp of the grey-coated Southerners.

At last, tired and heavy with sleep, he rested his head on his musket and dozed.

Suddenly he springs erect. There is a gentle rustling in the bushes close at hand. Simply a twig snapped; but it was sufficient to wake him whose ears were ever on the elert, even in sleep.

He challenges. But only the wind moans fitfully through the stunted trees hard by. He listens intently. Ah! He is sure of it now. He peers into the darkness, grasping his bayoneted rifle, and bending forward, he catches sight of a man's figure crouching low on the ground. Again a challenge. This time the new-comer speaks, softly and hesitatingly.

"Is that you, Jackson?"

The sentry starts. The question is repeated. Then the Confederate answers.

"Yes. Who are you?" He is still prepared to resist an attack. The figure rises from the ground and advances slowly. Gill can see that the man is unarmed. At least, his hands are free.

"I am Daniel Freemore."

Jackson does not remember the name. He says so.

"I was at Ajaccio more than a year ago."

Then the sentry recollects all. He lowers the point of his bayonet and holds out his hand.

"This is a strange place to meet after so long a time."

"It is," replied Freemore.

"How on earth did you come to know of my existence here?"

"We get to know some curious things over there," remarked the American significantly, pointing over his shoulders towards the Northern camp.

"Doubtless. But I'm glad to see you, old fellow," continued Jackson, only half enthusiastically; for he was beginning to doubt the identity of the man.

"Probably. But I cannot stay here bandying. I came to you on business, Jackson, and my time is short." He glanced towards the east, where the dim luminosity in the sky showed that the day was breaking, although it was still dark. "Yes," he continued, "I want a little information concerning the position of your troops, and so on. Just a little exclusive information you know," he added, smiling grimly as he spoke.

Jackson flushed angrily. Here before him was a spy. Plainly it was his duty to capture him. But then this man claimed to be his friend. The questions flashed through his brain, what kindness had Freemore shown to him when in Corsica? None. What benefits had he derived from this man's acquaintance? None. True, he had spent many a jolly evening with Freemore, but nothing had occurred to weld them in a bond of friendship. He had been merely a passing acquaintance.

Freemore seemed to guess his thoughts.

"It's not a bit of use your touching me," he said significantly. "It will be the worse for you in the long run, depend upon it."

"How do you mean?" asked Jackson.

"I have news that will astonish you."

"I want no astonishing news," replied the Englishman hotly, advancing to lay hands on the Federal.

"Stand off, I say! Listen. Who do you think is yonder?" he continued, pointing in the direction of the distant watch-fires.

"I don't care a hang. You are my prisoner," and again he attempted to lay hold of the Northerner.

"Louise is in the camp," spoke the latter calmly.

Gill stopped; his heart beat fast. The next moment he thought the man was hoaxing him in order to effect his escape. How could Louise possibly be in the camp of the Federlas when he left her not three weeks since safely ensconced in her Southern home? How, too, did the American even know of her existence? Still more marvellous was it that he should know of her connection with him. These questions passed quickly through his throbbing brain, and at length he asked:

"In Heaven's name speak. What do you mean?"

"Simply that Louise Poindexter, your betrothed, is a prisoner in our camp."

Then he proceeded to relate how the house of Michael Poindexter had been fired, and the old man killed, and how his daughter had been carried off. How by chance he found out that she was the lover of his old friend, Gill Jackson, and how he had pledged her his word of honour to do all in his power to discover the whereabouts of her lover.

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In this, he continued, he thought he had been fairly successful, and as a slight return for his service she hoped the Englishman would not hesitate to give him the information he so much required.

Jackson was as pale as death. Within his breast raged a fearful combat between love and duty.

He was but human, and after a few moment's silence he spoke slowly and in measured tones.

"I am willing to give you what information lies in my power, on condition that you undertake to enable Louise Poindexter to escape from your camp, and to come to me here, by to-morrow night."

"I will agree to these terms," replied the American, after a pause. "To-morrow night, at this hour, you will hear a jackal bark. You will whistle three times. That shall be the signal. Louise will be dressed in a long cloak, and she will approach you in the same manner that I have done. Now let me have what I want to know, and quickly, too."

He drew out a note-book and scribbled down the replies which the half-dazed Jackson made to his questions. This accomplished, he thrust the book into his pocket, and held out his hand.

"Good-bye. She shall be here to-morrow night."

"You swear it?"

"On my oath. Farewell."

He disappeared into the darkness. The bugle sounded in the Confederate camp, and Jackson was relieved at his post.

The following night he strode up and down on the little hillock, and impatiently waited for the moment when he should once more embrace the girl he loved.

As the time for the meeting drew near, he ceased his wearisome walk and leant upon his rifle.

Far behind him the Confederates are deep in slumber, and one by one the bivouac fires have died out. Now there is not a sound save the soughing of the night wind as it rises and falls across the plain.

Suddenly there is a gentle rustling in the bushes. Gill starts and listens. A jackal barks. He whistles low three times. Then the figure of a young girl, clothed in a long cloak, rises near the bushes to the right, and advances towards him.

He has thrown his rifle to the ground, and steps out with a half-suppressed cry of joy.

"Louise!"

The girl is clasped in his arms. Then he hears these words hissed into his ear.

"Dost remember Matteo Leubo, whom thou most foully slew? I am not Louise, but Marina, his sister."

From beneath the folds of her cloak flashes the bright blade of a stiletto. Deep it sinks into the breast of her victim. With scarce a groan he falls dead.

The bugle sounded in the Confederate camp, and the daughter of Corsica disappeared into the darkness.

The victory of the Federals in the battle which took place the next day was chiefly due to their possession of the information which Freemore had obtained from Jackson.

Le Vier.

READ! MARK!! LEARN!!!

We are going to publish a Magazine.
It will be called

Pearson's Magazine.

It will be beautifully Illustrated. It will be Published Monthly. It will cost Sixpence. The first number will appear on

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12th.

These facts are tersely put. They are to be remembered.

We owe no apology for invading a field apparently, perhaps, adequately occupied. We can truthfully say that **Pearson's Magazine** will resemble no other. Holding an opinion, whether rightly or wrongly, that the whole conception and conduct of the British Magazine as it exists to-day is far behind what it should be, we are endeavouring to issue an ideal one. The whole thing will be so original, will embody so many new ideas, and will give so much for so little, that we confidently expect to see **Pearson's Magazine** take the first rank in popularity and prestige from the very commencement. It will be the finest magazine the world has ever seen at the price. In its artistic and literary merits it will stand alone.

That we are prepared to back this sanguine view is shown by the fact that the First Edition of Number One will consist of **200,000 copies**, while the cost of producing it will exceed **Four Thousand Pounds.**

It has become largely the habit of magazine editors to publish the work of the best writers simply because their names are appended to it. We are not going on this system. Nothing will be printed in **Pearson's Magazine** simply because it is written by an author with a great name. At the same time, every man and woman whose writings have gained great repute will be invited to contribute. We want the best work of the best authors and the best artists, and we shall pay the best prices for it.

Every line of **Pearson's Magazine** will be readable, and everybody may read it. It will be clean without being twaddly.

THE

Xmas No. of Pearson's Weekly

Will be ready Wednesday, Nov. 13th.

JUST LOOK AT THE ATTRACTIONS IT WILL CONTAIN.

Three Magnificent Coloured Plates, each of which is, to use an Irishism, better than the other.

Splendid and seasonable stories by the following well-known authors: F. Frankfort-Moore, George Griffith, W. L. Alden, Allen Upward, G. B. Burgin, William Le Queux, and others.

The number will be profusely illustrated throughout by some of the best artists of the day. Among them we may mention Harold Piffard, A. Kemp Tebby, Miss Ethel Porter, Raymond Potter, E. F. Sherie, and E. S. Hope.

THIS IS NOT ALL.

Every purchaser will have a chance of gaining **£50.** For particulars of how to acquire this comfortable little sum we must ask you to look in the Xmas No. itself.

And yet our Xmas No. can be bought on November 13th for Sixpence.

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Diamond ✣ Cut ✣ Diamond.

We were housebreakers, Bill and me, and one night he came into my lodgings, and said: "Look here, Jack, I've just come across the primest job I've seen or heard of for years. It's a semi-detached house in Thatcham; only occupants an old gent with the gout, a footman or butler, and two women servants; but as to the swag, it's enough to make your mouth water! To be sure," he added thoughtfully, "there's a couple of uncommon wicious-looking mastiffs in the back garden, and the mounted cops pass by pretty frequent. But there! it's worth double the risk."

Now, anyone with half an eye to business would have seen that the affair was too risky, but Bill had been drinking hard, and, although I tried to persuade him to leave the job alone, he kept as obstinate as a mule. To tell the plain truth, I had set my mind on a much easier thing at Barnsbury, where, if the swag was not quite so tempting, the risk was nothing like as great.

At last Bill began to get a bit excited; and presently he bursts out: "Risk, indeed! Well, it comes to this, if you're afraid to join me, you can't expect to go shares in the swag, and what's more, you shan't either. You didn't used to be so chicken-hearted, and we'd better separate. I shall go on with my job at Thatcham; and if you want to go to Barnsbury you can go by yourself."

So the end of it was that we broke up the partnership and separated, and I could see that Bill still meant to go to Thatcham, while on my side I was equally determined to carry out my job at Barnsbury.

Now, although, as I said before, Bill and me didn't actually quarrel, yet it riled me to think that if, after all, he did pull off his affair, he would not only have the laugh at me, but would probably have two or three hundred pounds worth of swag all to himself into the bargain; and it was partly the thought of that and partly because I had a kind of wish to get the better of Bill if I could, that after thinking it well over, I took a piece of paper from a cupboard, and after much trouble, for at that time I was not as good a hand at writing or spelling as I am now, managed to turn out a letter something like this:

To Mister Manning, Oak House, near Thatcham, Kent. Sir,—I feels it to be my duity to inform you that it have come to my knowledge that an attempt is goin' to be made to brake into your house either to-morow night or the next night.—Yours truly, A Friend.

When I had sealed and directed this note, I went out and dropped it into a pillar-box; and I don't know how it was, but I felt as if a sort of load was taken off my mind. Then I began to get my tools ready for the job I had on hand, and about half-past eight o'clock I took a train to Highbury.

It was still rather early when I reached the Square, and the lights in the houses had not been put out yet; so after looking up and down to see if all was quiet, I passed my bag through the railings of the Square and hid it carefully among the bushes. Then I walked off to spend an hour or so in a cosy little public-house I had seen on my way from the railway station.

When at last it was late enough to begin work, I came back to the Square and took a look round first to see that all was quiet. Not a soul was about, and the whole Square was in darkness by this time, as there were no street lamps anywhere near.

In another minute I struck a match, and, after lighting my bull's-eye, took the bag from the Square.

The painters had been at work on the house that I was going to break into, and it was that fact that led me to choose that night in particular, for, as I had expected, they had left one of their ladders against the front of the house. They had tied a piece of board up the front of the ladder to prevent anyone climbing up; but such a simple matter never yet stopped a professional burglar, and before you could wink I had climbed up the back of the ladder until I came to the end of the board, when, of course, I got round to the front.

Resting the lantern on the drawing-room window-sill, I was just about to get the window open somehow, when I distinctly heard a creaking noise like an iron gate being opened, and almost before I could look down a great flash of light burst from below as a gruff voice cried sharply: "Now then, the game's up!"

I looked below, and almost dropped off the ladder with fright, for there stood a couple of cops as cool as cucumbers. But I wasn't going to give up if I could help it, and quick as thought I began to climb towards the roof. Before I had gone a dozen steps up the ladder, the second floor window, which I had imagined belonged to the nursery, was dashed up, and another policeman put out his head.

"Now, come," he exclaimed, with a grin, "the game's up, so you'd better come quietly!"

This time I was obliged to confess that it was all up, and in another quarter of an hour I was safe in the nearest police-station, wondering how on earth I had managed the affair so clumsily as to be caught napping in this fashion. The only way to account for it that I could guess was that someone must have seen me hide my tools in the Square.

I was not left long in the dark, however, as to the real reason, for presently a sergeant came in with a slip of paper in his hand.

"Do you know this writing?" he said, with a broad grin on his face; "a lad brought it here about two hours ago."

I took the paper, and I must say that after I had spelt the words over, I was never struck so much of a heap in my life before. This is what was written on the paper as well as I can recollect:

To the inspector pollis, hibary pollis statan, hibary. This is to gev you notis that number 21 albert square, barnesbery, is going to be broke open tonite.

There was no name at the end of the letter, but I knew who had sent it. The policemen were all grinning away as pleased as you like; and although I felt almost mad, yet I couldn't help thinking what a blessed idiot I had been to carry out the job after falling out with my mate Bill Flowers. Fancy me writing a letter to Thatcham so as to stop his game, and him writing to the police station at Highbury and getting me nabbed! It was the cleanest bowl out I ever heard of—a regular case of "diamond cut diamond."

Well, I went for my trial, and got five years; but now comes the primest part of my story, for the first person I set eyes on when I got into the prison yard was Bill Flowers. He had been caught at Thatcham two nights after me, and had only been brought in the van that very morning.

Jerome Parker.

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Man's Forgiveness.

CHAPTER I.

Colonel Austell's daughter was the belle of the season, and reported to have had more offers to marriage than Miss Sallie Barnes from Boston, the latest millionairess.

The match-making mothers heaved a sigh of relief when her engagement to Lord Wregis appeared in the *Morning Post*.

"Of course she is making a good match; we always knew she would," said Mrs. Cheveley, meeting a friend at the corner of Victoria Street. "But it really is quite comforting to feel the matter is settled definitely. She was getting too dangerous since she changed her maid and her style of hair-dressing. Anyhow, she will have enough letters of congratulation to answer now to keep her out of mischief for a long time. Are you going to the Stores, too? Good; we can walk together."

So the ladies passed on up the street, still discussing Blanche Austell.

The season was drawing to a close, and all fashionable London had made up Goodwood parties and lists of guests for country houses.

Lord Wregis could hardly realise his good fortune when Blanche accepted him—not that he need have wondered, since he was a man any woman might love. Fair and pleasant to look upon, with widely opened blue eyes, and an eminently clean, well groomed appearance. The Austells were his guests at Goodwood, and after that he returned with them to their country seat at Wilton.

They were planning amateur theatricals, and a vast difference of opinion reigned in the house. Miss Barnes, from Boston, considered that she should have first say in the matter, and clamoured for *Pygmalion and Galatea*, or *The Palace of Truth*. "I guess those Grecian robes would suit me down to the ground," she declared, regarding her elegant figure in a long mirror.

Served as an excuse to pair off after dinner.

"But, my dear Miss Barnes," said Blanche deprecatingly, "they are so hackneyed and *so* ambitious. I would sooner not act at all than drone out 'I love you, Philamir,' till the audience grow sick of the oft-repeated sentiment. We had contemplated the *Pantomime Rehearsal*, but that is really as well-known.

"I pine for a light society drama, with costumes by Worth, and a staircase in the middle of the stage to show off our trains. I simply won't act unless there is a staircase."

"I have set my heart on a moonlight scene," said Sallie Barnes.

"I know a fellow," said Johnnie Saunders, "who goes in for that sort of thing professionally, don't you know. He is quite a gentleman, and most entertaining in society. I have heard people declare that half our amateurs get up their shows as an excuse to flirt with Frank Roy. Of course, it's beastly vulgar of them to say such things, when it is all done for charity."

"How could we get hold of this charming acquisition to manage, coach, and take all the responsibility off our shoulders?" asked Mrs. Austell, relieved beyond measure at young Saunders' suggestion.

"Oh! I will wire to him, if you like, to know if he is disengaged. He could help us then to a piece, and order the scenery from town. It will save us no end of grey hairs and sleepless nights."

"What do you think of the idea, Rex?" said Mrs. Austell, addressing her future son-in-law.

"A capital one," answered Lord Wregis cheerfully.

"I think theatricals are a great bother," sighed Mrs. Austell, "but dear Blanche is so mad about acting, and never really happy unless she is studying a part."

"And a very quick study she is, too," said Lord Wregis, with an admiring glance at his beautiful young *fiancée*. "She makes me hear her parts. Blanche's histrionic genius is a marvel."

The house party had all since their arrival learned and rehearsed at least three different parts a piece, which ended in smoke. They served as an excuse to pair off after dinner, sitting or strolling up and down.

"I hope we shall get Roy," Mr. Saunders remarked. "But he is so often engaged with amateur clubs, and

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sometimes manages travelling companies. I know he was in the provinces last summer."

Johnnie, however, sent his wire to the "Actor's club," and received a satisfactory reply.

Colonel Austell then communicated with him by letter, and a day was arranged for his arrival. As Blanche was coming up the avenue, she met the phæton and pair going to meet Mr. Roy.

She was alone, and stopping the carriage, sprang into the driver's seat.

"It would be amusing to go to the station," she thought, "and meet the hired stranger."

Blanche was a good whip, and managed the spirited bays to perfection.

She felt a wave of shyness creep over her as she waited for the train to steam up to the platform. It was quite a new experience for her, to feel a qualm of trepidation.

A dark, almost Spanish-looking man came towards the carriage, with clean cut features and magnetic eyes.

Blanche bent forward and introduced herself.

A moment later he was beside her in the phæton, and they drove back through the country lanes.

There was no lack of conversation, for Mr. Roy brimmed over with pleasant anecdotes and mild sarcasms about his career Blanche found herself confiding to him her wild passion for the stage, the ecstasy she experienced when indulging her talent, and asking his advice on the best studies.

In fact, she had so much to say, that she felt quite sorry when they passed through the gates of Salisbury Hall.

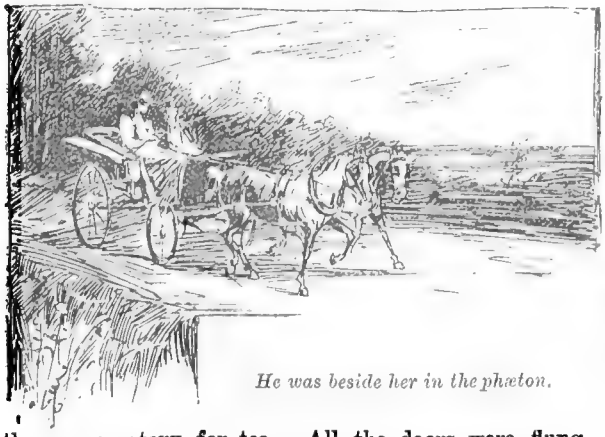
Lord Wregis and Johnnie Saunders were smoking in the verandah as the carriage drove up to the door.

Blanche's smiling eyes detected a look of annoyance on her *fiancé's* face as she stepped lightly to the ground.

"Have *you* been to the station?" he asked.

"Well, it looks like it," she replied laughing.

Then she introduced Frank Roy, and they went into



He was beside her in the phæton.

the conservatory for tea. All the doors were flung open—one leading to a drawing-room, and the others to the garden. A host of low inviting chairs were placed near the wicker tea-table, standing by a bank of maiden-hair fern.

A fountain played at the far end, in which Blanche would feed her gold fish with crumbs from her cake.

Again the topic of conversation turned to the subject of a play. Finally *The Ladies' Battle* was decided upon.

"It is rather an appropriate name," lisped Captain Raleigh, an admirer of Sallie Barnes, who wanted to replenish his attenuated coffers.

"Yes," cried the sprightly Sallie, flashing her diamond rings. "We have all quarrelled dreadfully since theatricals were on the *tapis*."

"Mr. Roy, of course, will be Henri," said Blanche. "I shall be the countess, and Sallie will be Léonie. I know it is rather a small part for you, dear," turning to her friend. "But Mr. Roy arranged it all coming from the station."

Sallie's face fell. She yearned to be a countess, if only in masquerade.

CHAPTER II.

Blanche was sitting in the library window discussing Frank Roy with Miss Barnes.

"Is he not coaching us splendidly?" she said.

"Yes," replied Sallie somewhat sharply, "and especially his love scenes with you. I notice he always takes them twice over. If I were Lord Wregis I should be quite uneasy."

Sitting in the library window.

"Nonsense, my dear girl, it is his love of art, not the common craving for flirtation, which lights the fire in 'Henri's' eyes, and strips his soul bare to the audience when he cries: 'What a face, what intellect, what soul!'"

"That is because he sees *you* in the wings waiting for your cue, Blanche. I should certainly advise you to be careful. That sort of people sometimes go too far. I had some experience once of an operatic singer in a New York Hotel. He was impertinent enough to ask me to marry him."

"Yes, but that was very different; you were not engaged."

"Oh! yes I was. But it came to an end when I crossed the Atlantic. I had so many admirers on board; it seemed quite a pity to be tied up. England is the place to marry well in."

"Rex is far too generous—too good and manly to be jealous," protested Blanche, her mind still fixed on the subject of Frank Roy. "Rex believes in me so thoroughly, he would never for a moment doubt my constancy. If he did I should not love him."

"*Do* you love him?" asked Sallie, opening her eyes very wide.

Blanche flushed rosy red.

The question startled her.

"What an odd thing to say, Sallie! Why, of course. I am engaged to him."

"Yes, but that doesn't always count. We sometimes love just the people we are *not* engaged to—and never can be. The impossibles, you know. It is tremendously fascinating to imagine yourself madly attached to some one who is utterly out of your reach—married—or penniless—or——"

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"Don't!" cried Blanche, with a little cry, putting her hands to her ears; "you frighten me, Sallie, when you talk so."

She was white to the lips now, and her friend saw it.

"There is a certain sorcery about love, Blanche; it is an overpowering passion that sometimes leads you astray, before you know you are in its clutches—a witchcraft—a——"

"Really," broke in Miss Austell, with a nervous laugh, "one would think you were in love, Sallie."

"Perhaps I am," she replied, "with Mr. Roy! He is a most fascinating man, and as handsome as an Englishman."

"He *is* an Englishman."

"There is foreign blood in those dark eyes, mark my words; and the tone of his skin is decidedly that of the south."

"Hush!" as a step was heard on the verandah.

"Why, it is Mr. Roy," whispered Sallie, "and in dress clothes, too. We shall be horribly late for dinner. It is past seven."

"I dare say he heard you talking, and has been just outside all the time," said Blanche, her heart sinking.

"I *should smile!*" declared Sallie, sauntering out of the room.

Blanche paused a moment by the window, gazingly dreamily at the red sky.

Frank Roy saw her, and as their eyes met, the girl's cheeks seemed suddenly suffused by the after-glow from the setting sun.

"I must go and dress," she said; "but I want that yellow rose, and it is just out of my reach"—pointing to the wall of the house—"will you pick it for me, Henri?"

And cried—for a yellow rose!

He reached up and plucked the flower eagerly.

"How good you are to me!" he murmured, holding out the rose.

"Good! Why?"

"To let me serve you, and gather the blossom you will wear to-night on your heart."

A light little laugh broke from Blanche, but there was a ring of tragedy in it.

She was thinking of the good, loving, trusting man to whom she had promised her hand.

"Must you go yet, can you not stay one moment longer?" whispered Frank Roy.

A strange thrill of terror ran like a knife through Blanche.

Why did her heart beat faster with joy when this dark man laid his hand on her arm and spoke in lowered tones? Why did Rex's open smile and honest eyes fade from her vision?

Was it the sorcery, the witchcraft, of which Sallie Barnes had spoken?

She tried to remember her lover's unselfish devotion, his nobility of character, and place it before the alluring accents of another's whispered adoration. But the fascination of Frank Roy was falling round her like a cloud, a heavy smothering vapour, soothing her harassed mind with deadly perfumes.

"Please do not detain me," she said faintly, grasping the yellow rose.

As she took it from him he slipped a sheet of paper into her palm.

Then Blanche fled from the rooms, for the walls had a thousand eyes, and the doors were full of ears. Even the pictures on the staircase scowled and frowned, while the mirrors reflected her guilty conscience.

She met Lord Wregis on the landing.

"Dearest," he said, "you are very late."

"I know."

He took the rosé from her, though she retained the hidden writing.

"What do you want with it, Rex?"

"I am going to wear it to-night, Blanche, because you picked it, because it is yours."

"But yellow is a jealous colour, and the rose is too large for a button-hole."

"Not so large as my heart, darling, or the love that fills it. No, Blanche," as she held out both hands intreatingly for the blossom. "I will go and gather you a hundred more—leave me this one."

Something very like a tear glistened in the girl's blue eyes as she reached her room. They both had blue eyes—Rex and Blanche.

She read the crumpled sheet of writing, verses in Frank Roy's peculiarly artistic hand, raving sentimentally over Miss Austell's delicate finger tips.

"I never thought there was so much poetry in nails. If father or mother knew—if Rex knew!"

Her head drooped, her breast heaved. She pressed the doggerel passionately to her lips, and cried—for a yellow rose!

"You are not doing your part a bit well to-night, Countess," cried Blanche in her shrillest treble. "You seem as limp as a muffin. Are you beginning stage fright, for the all-eventful evening is drawing horribly near, and the seats are selling like wildfire? I believe you will be able to build an entirely new ward for your pet hospital."

"Better still, she might have erected a new building altogether if she had no theatricals at all," said Johnnie cynically.

"How, Mr. Saunders?"

"By giving the money that is being spent on scenery and frocks, music and printing, to be sure! Think what a lot of trouble it would have saved us, too."

"But we should not have had any fun then," declared Sallie. "Besides," lowering her voice, "that remark of yours was hardly polite to Mr. Roy. I thought you were going to run him in with the 'properties.' I did not think you were so *gauche!*"

"He will forgive me, and was far too busy rehearsing Miss Austell in her fit of mock laughter, to listen to anyone else. Did you hear those stingy old Brownings shied at the seven-shilling seats, and are going in half-crown unreserveds?"

"How mean of them; some people have no scruples. But they are ten in family, and all at home."

"Blanche is feeling rather faint—we are not going to finish the rehearsal," said Mrs. Austell, who acted as prompter.

"Shall we go into the ballroom and have a hop?" suggested Johnnie.

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The idea was immediately taken up.

"Yes, if Lord Wregis will play." Rex, who was the best natured fellow living, readily agreed.

"Don't you bother your head about these people, darling," he whispered to Blanche. "I will look after them, and see they are amused. Just you sit quiet till you feel better; shall I make you comfortable on the lounge in the blue-room?"

"Thank you so much," she replied, with a wan smile.

He piled the cushions behind her head, and brought her a bottle of lavender salts.

"Would you like a book, dearest?"

"No. I will rest and think."

"Let some of the thoughts be for me," he said tenderly.

"Are you coming to dance, Mr. Roy?" asked Sallie, as they left the stage.

"No. I want to run over my part alone. I have had no time to consider it, and I am a very indifferent dancer."

He had been close to Lord Wregis when he spoke to Blanche.

Frank had heard some mention of the blue-room. Stealthily his steps stole in that direction. He pushed back the door and walked in boldly, then started at the sight of Miss Austell, and apologised profusely.

"A thousand pardons—I had no intention of disturbing you."

"Oh! I am glad you came," said Blanche, rising. "I am better now, but my head aches a little. This room

"Who would have thought it?" said Sallie Barnes.

is too hot. I shall go out on the verandah and stroll up and down."

"May *I* come?

"Of course, if you like."

They passed out together into the cool air, which played on Blanche's heated forehead.

"Only a few more nights," whispered the man, "and we shall never meet again. Our paths are very different—we shall go our separate ways—apart."

A deep sigh escaped Blanche.

"How I envy you in your career," she said; "you are going to travel with your own company—to act my favourite plays. Some day I may chance on a theatre and see your name. I may watch you across the glare of the footlights, and applaud——"

"Certainly not," said the indignant mother.

"Do not kill me with your light talk," he muttered passionately. "Is it nothing to you that I go with a broken heart, that my life's love is but a plaything in the hands of one so far above me? Oh! to adore a star beyond your reach—to worship at a shrine of stone and ice—*that* is true torture—*real* pain! Blanche! Blanche! won't you say one kind word to your Henri before he goes?"

"Don't ask me," she replied, battling with a fierce temptation. "I am only human! Go away!"

She knew she was ready to give her soul into his keeping, to sacrifice everything for the sake of this love that deadened every other thought.

Her peace of mind had been destroyed, a burning fire raged within.

"Be mine," he whispered, drawing her to him, and seeing her weakness. "Be my wife, Blanche—beloved! You shall satisfy your glorious talent—and rise to fame—you will have all London at your feet in time! I adore—worship you—you shall never regret the step."

Voices were calling her; she had been missed.

His lips pressed her cheeks. For the moment she feared her senses were deserting her.

Then, turning to him in a fit of blind rapture, she looked straight into his eyes.

"Yes, yes, Frank!"

CHAPTER III.

"WHO would have thought it?" said Sallie Barnes. "Dear Blanche was such a sweet girl, brought up in the lap of luxury. In fact, the very last person in the world of whom one would have expected such a thing. I used to chaff her a bit about him, you know, Mr. Saunders, when we were both staying at Salisbury Hall. I wish she had never got up those miserable theatricals that led to her doom. It was all your fault, too, for you introduced Frank Roy; but I suppose you have heard all the scandal?"

"No, I have not. Raleigh told me Miss Austell had chucked poor Wregis, and made a shocking *mésalliance*."

"Why, she is acting in a travelling company in the provinces, under the personal direction of her husband.

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Naturally she has quite cut herself adrift from home and friends. Lord Wregis is perfectly broken-hearted! I hear her parents have vowed to cast her out of their world, never to look on her face again."

All the light had indeed gone out of Lord Wregis's life when Blanche fell from the lofty pedestal on which he had placed and loved her; yet he did not wrap himself up in the stony anger with which Colonel and Mrs. Austell tried to bury their sorrow.

In the solitude of his room.

He came himself to Blanche's mother, imploring her to forgive her daughter's caprice.

"I find Blanche is to be at the Comedy Theatre, Manchester, this week," he said. "I intend seeking her out. If I can persuade her to leave the stage, will you receive her?"

"Certainly not," said the indignant mother. "I have done with her for ever."

So Lord Wregis returned disheartened, to gaze for hours, in the solitude of his room, at the beautiful face of his lost love, in the gold locket she had given him.

Already Blanche Roy had awoke from the fool's paradise to which she had flown. Her health and spirits drooped, while her thoughts would wander back regretfully to her home, the good man whose love she had discarded—a blinded victim no longer.

If only the past could be recalled! Her stage life was one of toil and bondage; her husband an exacting master, the worst side of whose nature she soon discovered.

Lord Wregis went to Manchester, and with a fast-beating heart and careworn mien sought the theatre. He met a friend at the entrance who had known Blanche in past days. The man spoke to him casually, yet the few words of conversation galled him.

He sent a note to the stage-door, asking if he might see her.

The answer came in a few hurriedly-written lines:

"Not to-night; I cannot bear it. Come to the above address to-morrow morning. I am in great trouble."

The following day he drove to her lodgings, inquiring anxiously for Mrs. Roy.

Blanche appeared pale and trembling.

"Oh! Rex," she cried, "I am so glad you are here. Frank is dreadfully ill. I am frightened out of my life!"

She looked so child-like and helpless in her distress that he involuntarily drew her to him, as in the old days.

"Oh! don't, don't," she sobbed. "It seems so wicked to think how I loved him once, and now he is dying, and I cannot even pray for him to live. I feel so sinful, Rex. I loathe and hate myself!"

She led the way to a darkened room, and side by side they stood over the unconscious man, watching the grey shadow of death creep across his features.

The slumbering form struggled for a moment with some mighty foe, then sank back into a last still sleep.

"You may leave him," whispered the doctor to Lord Wregis, "and take that poor woman away. Her husband is dead."

As Rex led her from the room, she knew the truth, and her eyes were ablaze with passionate emotion. She clung to him in mortal terror, sobbing helplessly in his arms.

As Rex clasped the trembling form, the intoxication of his old love rose up to thrill him, as in the bygone days.

A complete and perfect sympathy reigned between them—a magnetism of soul.

* * * * *

Mrs. Roy was taken back into favour when she became Lady Wregis, though she had mourned her departed husband through long months, gowned in deepest black.

"It really is most romantic," said Sallie, when the dismal weeds were flung aside, and another band of gold encircled Blanche's finger. "It was simply lovely of that dear fellow to marry her after all, when she treated him so shamefully. Don't you think so, Mr. Saunders?"

"I would have done the same for you," he replied adoringly.

"Nonsense, Johnnie. Now you are *not* to propose again, because I am contemplating accepting Captain Raleigh. Blanche's wedding caused quite a sensation, didn't it? A girl with a history is always interesting,

A blinded victim no longer.

and everyone was bound to admire Lord Wregis' loyalty and devotion."

"I want to talk about ourselves," persists Johnnie Saunders.

"You make me tired," drawled Sallie Barnes.

Winifred Graham.

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THE MAGICAL CARDS.

(This tale is very popular in the kingdom of Naples, and, like many other legends owing their origin to that country, is remarkable for a curious mixture of Greek mythology and the beliefs of Christianity.)

ONCE upon a time there lived a young nobleman named Federigo, a handsome, well-built fellow of courteous manners and pleasing address, but, alas! of dissolute habits. He was excessively fond of wine and play, especially the latter. He never went to confession, and only haunted churches in quest of fresh opportunities for sin. Thus it happened that Federigo, after having ruined at play twelve young men of good family, who, in their desperation, became bandits, and perished unshriven in a desperate conflict with the king's soldiers, experienced himself a turn of luck, and in a short time, lost, not only all that he had won, but, in addition thereto, all of his inheritance, except a small estate in the country, where he retired to conceal his poverty and shame.

Three years he spent in retirement, hunting by day, and gambling for small stakes with his steward at night.

One day, just after returning from the most successful day's hunt he had ever had, a party of strangers, thirteen in number, came to his door and claimed his hospitality. Federigo, who was blessed with a generous soul, was rejoiced at the opportune arrival of guests on a day when he had ample provision for their entertainment. He accordingly bade them enter, made them welcome with the best grace in the world, and begged their indulgence if he did not entertain them suitably, as their visit had taken him completely by surprise.

"We will content ourselves with what you have," said the leader of the party, "but have supper ready as quickly as possible, as it is late, and my friend here," pointing to the most aged of his companions, "is very hungry."

Federigo did not wait to be told twice, but began preparations, and being desirous of treating his visitors to something better than the fruits of his hunt, ordered his steward to slay the last remaining kid. No sooner said than done, and the kid lay broiling on the spit.

When the supper was ready, Federigo expressed his regret to the chief of his guests that his wine was not of better quality.

Whereupon the stranger, having tasted the wine, replied:

"What do you complain of? You wine is perfect. I leave it to my friend here," pointing to the old man previously referred to.

The latter having sipped it, pronounced it excellent, and begged his host to drink with him. Federigo, who attributed all these compliments to the good breeding of his guests, filled his glass. What was his surprise to discover that the wine was more delicious than any he had ever tasted in his most prosperous days?

Divining from this miracle the presence of supernatural visitors, he immediately rose from the table, feeling himself unworthy to eat in such holy company, but the stranger commanded him to resume his seat, which he did.

After supper the visitors retired to the apartment that had been prepared for them, and Federigo, left alone with his steward, sat down to his customary game of cards, and drank up what was left of the magical wine.

The next day the visitors, being about to depart, their leader said to Federigo:

"We are well pleased with your treatment of us, and desire to reward you. Make three requests and they shall be granted, for we are all-powerful in Heaven, on Earth, and in the Infernal Regions."

Federigo drew from his pocket the pack of cards which never left him, and said:

"Master, let me win every game I play with these cards."

"So be it," was the reply.

The old man of the party, who stood close to Federigo (and who was no other than Saint Peter), said to him in a low voice:

"What can you be thinking of, miserable sinner? Why don't you ask for the salvation of your soul?"

"I'm not worried about my soul," replied Federigo.

"You have still two wishes," resumed the Master.

"Since you are so good to me, Master," said Federigo, "let it come to pass that whoever shall climb into the orange tree that shades my door shall be unable to come down without my permission."

"So be it."

At these words the good Saint Peter exclaimed:

"Miserable sinner, do you not fear the Inferno that awaits you? Ask the Master for a place in Paradise. You still have time."

"Oh, there is no hurry," replied Federigo, edging away from the keeper of the heavenly keys.

Being asked to name the third request, he said:

"I wish that whoever shall seat himself on that stool at my fireside shall be unable to rise without my consent."

This request was also granted, and the visitors departed on their journey.

They were not out of sight before Federigo, in his haste to test the powers of his precious pack of cards, hastily summoned his steward and engaged him in a game. Federigo played carelessly, scarcely looking at his hand. He won the first game without effort, then a second, then a third. Convinced that henceforth he could infallibly win, he immediately hastened to the city, alighted at the finest inn, and engaged its best apartments. The news of his arrival soon spread, and

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his former companions in debauch came in droves to see him.

"We thought we had lost you for ever," said Don Guiseppe. "We heard that you had turned hermit."

"You heard the truth," replied Federigo.

"How ever did you pass the time all these years that we have not seen you?" demanded the others.

"In prayer, my dear brethren," said Federigo, assuming a satisfied air; "and here, my friends," continued he, "is my prayer book," drawing from his pocket the pack of cards that he had guarded with tender care.

This sally elicited general laughter, and every one was convinced that Federigo had retrieved his fortunes in some foreign country at the expense of players less skilful than themselves; they were therefore burning for a chance to clean him out a second time.

Some of them, in their haste, proposed a game without further delay. But Federigo begged of them to postpone play for a while, invited them to an adjoining chamber, where a magnificent repast awaited them.

Before the arrival of his guests, Federigo had provided himself with a pack of cards precisely similar to the old one, with the view of substituting one for the other, as occasion might demand; his intention being to lose one out of every three or four games, in order to divert suspicion. He carried one pack in his right pocket, and the other in his left.

After supper, the company having seated themselves round a green-covered table, Federigo first brought out his profane pack, and fixed the limit of the game at a reasonable sum. Being anxious to enjoy the game and to measure his strength, he brought his utmost strength into play, but lost both the first and second games, not without secret vexation. He then ordered wine to be brought in, and took advantage of the moment when his guests were drinking to their past and future success to introduce his lucky pack. The other was deftly transferred to his pocket.

When the third game was in hand Federigo paid no further attention to the game, but employed himself in watching the others, and caught them cheating.

"Good," said he, "this justifies my taking from them without mercy."

His ruin had been the result of their trickery, not of their superior play or better luck. This theory gave him much comfort. It enabled him to entertain a higher opinion of his own relative skill, an opinion based on previous successes.

The third game was followed by many others, of which Federigo contrived to win the greatest number, so that he gathered in enough on the first night's play to pay for the supper and a month's rent. This was glory enough for one day. His disappointed companions promised on taking their leave to return the next evening.

The next day, and every day following, Federigo lost and won so judiciously, that in a short time he had accumulated quite a fortune, without awakening any suspicion as to the source of his good luck.

In due course of time he moved from his inn to a grand palace, where, from time to time, he gave magnificent entertainments, and the palace of Federigo became famous as the centre of pleasure.

At the end of a year of discreet play, he determined to put the crowning touch to his vengeance by impoverishing the leading nobles of the country. To this end, having converted into precious stones the bulk of his wealth, he invited these noblemen eight days in advance to a feast of extraordinary magnificence, for which he placed in requisition the best musicians and ballet-dancers in the country. It was announced that the festivities would wind up in a game without limit to the betting.

Everybody was anxious to go. Those who had no money squeezed it out of the Jews. The others brought their all. Federigo made a clean sweep of it, and departed the same night with his gold and precious stones. From that time on he adopted a rule not to use his lucky cards except against players whom he suspected of cheating. In a fair game he felt himself a master of all comers. In this manner he travelled all over the world, winning always, and living everywhere on the fat of the land.

In spite of all this, the memory of the twelve victims would thrust itself upon his conscience and embitter all his joys. At last he resolved one day to deliver them or share their fate.

Having taken this resolution, he started for the lower regions with a stick in his hand and a sack on his back, and without other escorts than his famous greyhound, which was called Marchesella. Arrived in Sicily, he scaled Mount Gibel, and plunged into the mouth of a volcano.

When he arrived at the bottom he was still separated from the entrance to Pluto's dominions by a courtyard, in which Cerberus stood guard. Federigo, taking advantage of a moment when Cerberus was busily occupied in making the acquaintance of Marchesella, ran rapidly across the yard, knocked at the door, and was forthwith conducted into Pluto's presence.

"Who art thou?" demanded the King of the Lower Regions.

"I am the gambler Federigo."

"What do you want here?"

"Pluto, if you think that the most expert gambler in the world is fit company for you to play with, here is what I propose. If I lose a single game you may have my soul to enrich your collection; but, if I win, it shall be my privilege to select one of your subjects for every game I win, and carry him away with me."

"Agreed," said Pluto, and called for a pack of cards.

"I have the cards," immediately said Federigo, and drew from his pocket the magical pack, and then began to play.

Federigo won the first game, and demanded the soul of Stefano Pagani, one of the twelve that he had come to save. It was immediately delivered, and Federigo placed it in his sack.

In the same way he won the second game, and the third, and so on up to twelve, and every time he won a game he called for one of the souls in which he was interested, and

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placed it in his sack. When he had completed the dozen he offered to keep on playing.

"Willingly," said Pluto (who was becoming wearied with losing), "but let us go out for an instant, it's getting uncomfortably hot here."

The truth was, he only sought a pretext to get rid of Federigo; for no sooner was he outside with his twelve souls than Pluto shouted at the top of his lungs: "Let the door be shut upon him."

The interview in the front yard between Cerberus and Federigo's greyhound was still going on, enabling Federigo to recross the yard without attracting the attention of that redoubtable watch dog. He then called Marchesella, who lost no time in rejoining his master, and with difficulty ascended to the mouth of the volcano on the summit of Mount Gibel. After emerging from the crater, he descended in the direction of Messina, more rejoiced at his spiritual victory than he had ever been over any earthly success. Arrived at Messina, he embarked for his native land, to end his days on his ancient manor.

At the end of thirty years (Federigo was then seventy) Death came to him and warned him to put his conscience in order, as his hour had come.

"I'm ready," said the dying man; "but before you carry me off give me some of the fruit of that tree that shades my door, and I will die happy."

"If that is all you want," said Death, "I am willing to gratify you."

He got up into the tree to gather an orange; but when he started to come down, he found it impossible to move.

"Ah, Federigo," cried he, "you have fooled me. I am in your power. Let me down and I will give you ten years of life."

"Ten years! I want more time than that," said Federigo. "If you wish to come down, old man, you'll have to give me more."

"I'll give you twenty."

"Your offer is but moderate."

"I'll give you thirty."

"You must yet go higher."

"Is it possible that you wish to live a century?"

"I do."

"But, Federigo, you are unreasonable."

"That I cannot help. I love life, and must have one hundred years. I need them in my business."

"Agreed, a hundred years it shall be," said Death.

No sooner said than he was able to get down.

As soon as he was gone, Federigo rose from his bed in a condition of perfect health, and began life anew with the vigour of youth and the experience of age.

The hundred years rolled on, and Death again knocked at his door, and found him in bed.

"Are you ready?" said Death.

"I have sent for my confessor," replied Federigo; "take a seat near the fire till he comes. I only await absolution before plunging into eternity with you."

Death, who was a good fellow, sat himself down on the stool, and waited an entire hour for the priest to arrive.

Beginning at last to get bored, he said to his host:

"Old man, have you not yet had time to put yourself in order during the century which has elapsed since our last meeting?"

"I had many other things to attend to," said the old man, with a mocking smile.

"Very well," replied Death, shocked at his impiety, "you have not another moment to live."

"Bah!" said Federigo, while Death tried in vain to rise. "I know that you will again grant me a few more years of respite."

"More years, wretch!" and he made futile efforts to get away from the chimney.

"Yes, certainly; but this time I'll not be so exacting; and as old age has no longer any charms for me, I'll be satisfied with forty years for my third course."

Death saw that he was fixed to his seat, just as he had before been to the tree, by a supernatural agency, but in his rage he was disinclined to yield.

"I know a way to hasten your decision," said Federigo; and he threw three faggots on the fire. The flames soon flew up and made it so hot for Death that he suffered torture.

"Spare me, spare me," he cried, when he felt his old bones burning; "I'll give you forty years of health."

At these words Federigo dissolved the spell, and Death flew off, half roasted.

At the expiration of the allotted time he came after his man, and found him ready with a sack on his shoulder.

"This time," he said, "I've got you safely; there is no retreat now. What are you going to do with the sack?"

"It contain the souls of twelve gamblers, friends of mine, whom I delivered from the Inferno."

"Let them return there with you, then," said Death. And, seizing Federigo by the hair, he flew into the air, turned towards the south, and plunged into the yawning mouth of Mount Gibel.

Arrived at the doors of the Inferno he knocked three times.

"Who's there?" said Pluto.

"Federigo, the gambler," replied Death.

"Well, he can't come in here," said Pluto, who immediately recalled the twelve games he had lost; "that scamp would depopulate my empire; keep that door closed."

As Pluto was firm in his refusal to open, Death transported his prisoner to the gates of purgatory, but the angel on duty refused him admission, as he found him in a condition of mortal sin.

It therefore became necessary, to the great disgust of Death, who hated Federigo, to steer towards the Celestial Regions.

"Who art thou?" said Saint Peter to Federigo, after Death had dropped him at the gates of Paradise.

"Your former host," replied he.

"Dost thou presume to present thyself here in a condition of sin?" exclaimed Saint Peter.

"Saint Peter," said Federigo, "is this the way I received you when you came, about a hundred and seventy years ago, and asked my hospitality?"

"There's no resisting this man," said the Saint; "let him enter since he is here."

And through the golden gates Federigo passed.

E. Garnet.

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THE FATAL DAGH

It was during the last evening of Bertram Chatsworth's and my own stay at Foxon Hall that he and I sat alone in the smoking-room.

He was silent—in fact, he had been silent and moody all day, a circumstance which surprised me, for he was naturally of a gay and lively disposition; he no longer chaffed, but sat back in his chair dreamily watching the faint wreath of blueish smoke that issued from the end of his cigar.

I had cudgelled my brains for quite a long while to know what he was thinking about, and it seemed highly probable that in the end I should have been as wise as when I commenced had not a coal come to my rescue. The fire, which for a long while had been burning hollow, yielding to the coaxing of my toe, suddenly caved in and a cinder fell with clatter on the fender. Bert started, smiled apologetically, and then said: "Excuse me, old fellow; you must think me frightfully boorish. My thoughts were far away in distant Australia, when that coal awoke me from my reverie."

"I myself was miles away in thought," I replied. "Do you know, Bert, that I have half a mind to run over to Australia next year? I have often wished to see Melbourne."

"Do, old fellow!" he replied heartily, taking a cigar from the box that lay on the table, and cutting off the end with a dagger-shaped knife of peculiar workmanship.

"That's a peculiar *pocket-knife*," I said chaffingly; "do you always take it about with you?"

"Yes," he replied gravely; "and I always shall till I return it to the owner—or till I die!"

"Then it isn't yours?" I queried.

"No! You know how my poor father met his death in the bush, stabbed in the back by an assassin's hand?"

"Yes," I replied; "but what has that knife to do with him?"

"My father was killed with it," replied Bert simply, as he replaced it in its sheath in his belt.

"Great Heavens!" I ejaculated, "why not give such a clue to the police? I should dread to carry such a memento about me."

"No, I shall not give any clue to the police," he replied, turning his handsome face to me. "Police? Ha! ha! What good are they? I shall confront the murderer face to face, and tax him with the deed! But—he may be married," continued Bert thoughtfully, "and if he is my vengeance would be foiled."

"And why should he be spared because he is married?" I queried.

"Ah! cannot you understand why?" said Bert gently. "His wife may know nothing of the stain on his soul. Why should I bring sorrow on a peaceful household? No, the children shall not suffer for their father's sin! I will not be the cause of their being scorned and shunned in after years as being the children of a—no! no! I'll tax him with the deed," continued Bert, his voice rising as he spoke, "and bid him come to some country where duelling is winked at. I shall bid him think of his wife and children! If I kill him my father will be avenged, and they will think that he died an honest man. If I die he will have nothing more to fear."

"But, Bert——"

"I should know him in a thousand," said Bert, unheeding my interruption, "and although he escaped my avenging bullet eighteen years ago, I promise you the next time he shall not be so fortunate. But come, old fellow, it is ten o'clock; we had better go to the drawing-room," he exclaimed as he rose from his chair and flung the end of his cigar into the grate. "The ladies and our host must be ready to go to this ball, I should say."

"Are you going to take that knife to the Oulan's dance to-night," I queried laughingly. Bert advanced towards the door, then, turning to me, he said gaily:

"That knife seems to amuse you—yes, I shall take it! Come along."

* * * * *

The ball given in honour of Mr. Oulan's engagement with Miss Villiers had commenced some time when we arrived, and as we made our way through the throng to greet Mr. Oulan and his *fiancée* I saw the former's face grow pale. He answered my salutations absently and bowed stiffly when I introduced Bert to him. "Excuse me, Mr. Herman," he said, following me as I advanced towards the dancers, "but is your friend a Colonial?"

"Slightly," I replied with a laugh; "he has lived in Australia thirty years; he was born there. Why do you ask?"

"Curiosity, mere curiosity," he replied absently; then seeing a young lady sitting with her mother close by, he continued: "allow me to introduce Mr. Herman to you, he is a capital dancer and a good conversationalist. Mr. Herman, Miss Merton; Miss Merton, Mr. Herman;" and, so saying, he disappeared.

The minutes flew swiftly by unheeded in the rhythm of the dance. I had claimed Miss Merton for every dance on her programme up to supper-time, and I was much amused at seeing the look of intense disgust depicted on the various faces when she said she was engaged for the dance solicited.

At last the clock struck twelve, the music ceased, and I took Miss Merton into supper, after having extracted from her the promise of having her as a partner for the next two waltzes.

The conversation at the supper-table was of the ordinary style until a certain Mr. Salter remarked what a peculiarly handsome scimitar hung over the mantelpiece. Nearly all the guests turned to look at the weapon; various comments also were passed on the beautiful tracery of the designs on the blade.

In the pause that momentarily followed these remarks I heard Bert say:

"Yes, it's a fine blade as far as designs goes, but I

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have a dagh traced even more curiously than that one up there!"

"Have you?" exclaimed Mr. Salter; "I wish I could see it!"

"Nothing easier, my dear sir," replied Bert, taking it from his belt and handing it to him across the table. "There it is, inspect it at your leisure."

"It is a Siamese dagh!" said Mr. Salter, after a brief inspection.

"Your pardon—a Burmese!" corrected Bert. "There is a tragic tale connected with that weapon!"

"Is there?" cried several voices; "do tell us."

"I feel quite certain it is Siamese," exclaimed Mr. Salter. "Here, Oulan, you are a good judge of Burmese work; tell me, is that Burmese?"

The dagh was passed down, each one inspecting it as they handed it along.

"Do tell the tale, please, Mr. Chatworth," exclaimed Miss Villiers. "It will be so nice to put a stop to the gossip that is going on."

"That is Burmese work," said Oulan, as with paling cheek he gazed at the weapon in his hand. "If the tale is ghastly, pray don't tell us about it; remember there are ladies present."

"I will leave it to the vote," replied Bert impassively.

Then, as cries of "Do tell us," resounded from all sides, he smiled sadly at Miss Villiers, and began:

"It is an old tale, and deals with a tragedy which, eighteen years ago, made Australia ring from Torres Straits to Bass Straits with horror. It was about a man who had killed another—his best friend—for the greed of gold." Here the narrator paused, then, after a moment's hesitation, he continued: "About twenty miles from Teetulpa there was a deep ravine; about half way down its rugged side, ran a ledge. Below, above, all around was bush—the great trackless bush!"

"Teetulpa!" said Mr. Salter, "why, that was the centre of the gold mining district in South Australia. Oh, you needn't look at me ladies and gentlemen," he said laughingly. "My superior knowledge came from our mutual friend, Oulan, who has so often told me of his adventures while in that very town!"

"Indeed!" remarked Bert in a surprised tone of voice. "Then doubtless you have seen the very spot to which I allude, Mr. Oulan?"

"Ye—es—I have—seen it!" replied Oulan hesitatingly.

"It was a desolated spot, then," continued Bert, "and one evening in the middle of September three figures might have been seen riding along its little-frequented track. Two of the riders were men, the third was but a lad in years—being only twelve—but a man in courage. He had dropped a long way behind the others, as his horse was tired. His two companions had already rounded the corner which marks the centre of the gulch, when he heard a pistol shot. Setting spurs to his horse he galloped on and saw the two men locked in a deadly embrace; ere he could interfere, one of the combatants had raised that dagh twice, and had twice sheathed it in his adversary's side."

A low murmur of horror broke from all present. Oulan poured himself out a glass of wine with a shivering hand, but he did not drink.

"The man, mortally wounded, fell," continued Bert impassively, "and as the lad dashed on to avenge his death the villain fired, killing the boy's horse, which, in its last agony, leapt into the air and then went crashing into the gulch below, carrying its rider with him; and there, fifty feet below the ledge, the lad watched the miner rob his friend and throw his body into the gulch. With a howl of execration the lad leapt to his feet and fired at the contemptible coward; the next moment a bullet crashed through his arm, smashing the bone in its flight, stretching him senseless and bleeding to the ground. When he recovered consciousness dawn was breaking. He was alone in the bush! He approached the corpse, the dagh (which Mr. Oulan has just placed before him) was still in the wound; he extracted it and kept it. There is the tale, there is nothing more to add, except that the lad swore to avenge the fallen man with it!"

"Are you that lad?" cried Oulan, in a shaky voice, as he arose ashy white, holding the glass of wine in his hand.

"I am," replied Bert coldly, rising also. "That man was my father! I swore on his dead body that I would give back the knife to its owner. Keep it Oulan, alias Jackson, South Australian miner, for it is *yours!*"

"Mine," gasped Oulan, an awful pallor creeping over his face, "you mistake, you—ah!" he cried, pressing his hand to his side, dropping the glass he held on the table, "that dagh!—that fatal dagh!" he cried, as he gazed with starting eyes at the ruby fluid which flowed in a ruddy stream across the pure white damask cloth, encircling the dagh in its course. "That knife! Ah, Heaven! have not the years of agony and remorse which I have suffered expiated my crime? Am I to be brought into the prisoner's dock after eighteen years misery? No, no! I will die first! I never killed Guy Chatworth! never! never!"

His wild incoherent talk ceased, he dropped back in his chair, cowering as though he beheld something which terrified him, his face became livid and he muttered. "And you stand there, Guy Chatworth, accusing me in your silence! Stand back!" he cried, as he started to his feet and seized a decanter. "Back! do you hear? Don't approach me, or I shall go mad!—mad!" he shrieked, as he dashed the decanter on the ground, smashing it into a thousand fragments; then he continued, in a mumbling, hurried voice: "Yes! yes! I did kill you—I did—is that not enough? Ah!—my head! my head!"

He pressed his hands to his temples, swaying gently as he did so, then he continued: "Yes, I killed you—ah—h—air! in mercy sake, air! I am suffocating! Air!—air!"

He tottered, swayed, and then, with a low moan, fell face downwards on the table.

In the horrible stillness which reigned after his fall, Bert strode up to him, and shaking Oulan, said:

"Jackson, what have you to say in answer to my charge?"

But the wretched man never stirred, for he was beyond the pale of earthly justice.

Tristam Monke.

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THE ♦ QUEEN ♦ OF ♦ NIGHT.

By HEADON HILL,
Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NARROW SHAVE.

I DO not know if I shall be believed, but it is a solemn fact that the glint of those murderous eyes behind the pistol barrel brought me positive relief. There had been too much hole-and-corner mystery in my life during the last few days to suit my temperament, and I welcomed the change that gave me an open foe at last, even though he had me at a disadvantage that threatened instant death.

"I do not profess to pit cunning against that of a professional criminal," said I, for his taunt had goaded me, "but if you kill me there will be one left who will prove your match. Your career is as good as ended, and you know it."

He laughed scornfully. "I am most assuredly going to kill you," he said. "That is what you are here for. But as to the second proposition—that your friend Kennard will avenge you by ending what you are pleased to call my career—pray put any such consideration as that out of your head. You have given me so much trouble that I should not wish you to go out of the world with the satisfaction of thinking that."

"I don't *think* it: I am *certain* of it. Kennard has as good as broken up your combination already," I replied defiantly. I saw vaguely that if I could prolong the wrangle by enticing him to gloat over his prospective victory, I might reduce the enormous odds at present in his favour. My own six-shooter was ready to hand in my pocket, but, covered as I was with his, I dared make no movement towards it. My only chance lay in creating a diversion, or in seizing some unexpected advantage before he tired of letting his jaw tackle run.

The battle was over.

He would have been wiser to have shot me as I stood, but his malicious desire that I should die miserable got the better of his prudence. "I can see, my thick-pated sailor, that I shall have to convince you that you are not playing with babies," he hissed. "Know then that it is now forty hours since six inches of cold steel settled Kennard's hash once for all. The land-crabs on the beach at Leghorn have made a mess of his identity by now—just as the deep-sea ones will be spoiling your ingenuous features ten minutes hence. We do not leave traces, my mates and I. The excellent Dicey here knows me too well to blab, and as for the Italians—well, they are all wanted for various crimes already, and are too highly paid to talk about a piece of work that would be as bad for them as for me. I did not choose my crew among the slums of Naples on account of their moral rectitude, you will understand. So you see, Forrester, that Zavertal and I shall soon be busy among the passengers of the *Queen of Night*, with no prying eyes and ears to obstruct us. Shall I take any inquiries from you to Miss Challenor—as to the state of her health?"

The news of Kennard's murder, and the thought that Aline would soon be at the mercy of these diabolical wretches, staggered me for a moment; but, seeing that my dear girl's only hope of life lay in my besting him now, I made a mighty effort to control myself and still to fight for delay. All this time Dicey remained flattened out against the wall, leaving a clear line for Vizard's pistol, but he was in an uncomfortable attitude from which I hoped much.

"I may be powerless to prevent your next crimes," I said, replying to the arch-villain, "but they will be your last. Do you imagine that I have no friends who will make inquiry for me? I shall be traced on board this vessel, which it will be proved was hired or bought by you."

"Don't make any such mistake," retorted Vizard. "The trap was baited by my own people, and I don't suppose that you, with your precious amateur-detective sharpness, told anyone where you were going. And if you did it is all one, for who are you but an escaped lunatic from the Convent of Santa Lucia? Our story, that you hid yourself on board the *Miranda*, and afterwards jumped overboard in a frenzy, will be so circumstantial that your disappearance will be accounted for in the most natural manner, I can promise you."

It was true enough, and I could have gnashed my teeth with rage at my folly in believing Mayfield's specious lies. With Kennard and myself out of the way every source of accusation against the "firm" would have been scotched, and their system might be carried on indefinitely—long after the victims of the present voyage had been forgotten. I was about to bid him shoot and be done with it, when Dicey blurted out a foc'sle oath at his constrained position.

"Why don't you plump the lead into him, Mister, and give us a rest?" he added. "I'm getting stiff-jointed—spreadeagled against this cursed wall."

"Clear out, then, and go on deck," said Vizard. "It is time the course was attended to, and I want to tease Captain Forrester a little more before I finish him. He must hear how his sweetheart is to fare first."

The subordinate scoundrel slouched forward to the companion-ladder, to which he ought to have had a perfectly clear path without interfering with his employer's aim. But by some clumsiness he passed to the right instead of to the left of the mast alongside of which Vizard had stationed himself, and thus momentarily came between us. My

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chance had come. Vizard shouted at him, with an imprecation to stand aside, but he was too late. I sprang forward, and clutching Dicey by the back used him as a shield, while with my right hand I drew my pistol. Simultaneously Vizard fired, hoping, I suppose, to hit some part of me that was not hidden by Dicey's body, but in the fluster he miscalculated and the shot took effect in my human armour-plate. The skipper of the *Miranda* drooped limply against me, but still holding him I fired over his shoulder and hit Vizard in the right arm. The battle was over. His revolver fell harmlessly to the floor.

Allowing Dicey to sink down in a huddled heap I aimed straight for Vizard's head. He glared at me like a wounded tiger, the blood pouring from his wrist, and for one second I thought he was going to spring at me. But controlling himself with an effort that sent a muscular spasm rippling over his handsome fiendish face, he even forced his features into a smile.

"The honours of war are with you, Captain," he said. "What is to be the programme?"

"You will right about face and stand with your back to me, and your face to the cabin wall," I said. "And keep your hands joined behind you."

Somewhat to my surprise he obeyed, and walking up to him I felt him all over in case he should have a second weapon. Sure enough he had a long clasp dagger, of which I relieved him; and then, after picking up his dropped pistol, I bade him precede me up the companion. Arrived on deck, a hasty glance showed that one of the Italians was at the wheel on the bridge, while the other sailor was lounging in the bows. The engineer was presumably attending to his duties below.

"Now," I said, pointing to a coil of rope lying under the bulwarks just forward of the bridge, "go and sit on that rope. The first movement you make, or the first attempt to speak to the Italians, and you are a dead man. The moon is full, and I shan't miss."

He shrugged his shoulders, and sitting down on the coil began to bind up his wound with a handkerchief. Without relaxing my watch on him I then went up on to the bridge, and taking the fellow at the wheel by the collar slung him down on to the deck, giving him to understand by a plentiful display of my revolver that he had to sit still on the opposite side to Vizard. The man in the bows seemed to have grasped the situation and discreetly remained where he was, while the engineer was attending to his duties below in happy ignorance of what was going on on deck. Then, with a glance at the binnacle to see that the course was right for Cagliari, I took the wheel, pistol in hand and ready to use it on very small provocation.

He obeyed.

For several hours the *Miranda* plodded on without any demand on me arising beyond unceasing vigilance and an occasional twist to the spokes of the wheel. Vizard sat quiet on the coil of rope, and from his attitude seemed to

Came staggering athwart our course.

slumber, though I knew better than that. The man's subtle brain, I had no doubt, was already hard at work devising schemes for besting me, or at least for escape, before I handed him over to the law.

The two Italian sailors gave no trouble, but stretched themselves in a sleep that as like as not was genuine, while of the stricken Dicey there was no sign, and I did not know whether he was alive or dead. The engineer made himself acquainted with the change of skippers shortly after I took the wheel by protruding his head from the stoke-hole, to quickly withdraw it before my levelled revolver; but he showed no resentment, and when I tested his subservience by giving him an order on the engine-room bell it was promptly obeyed.

So matters were when, at about two in the morning, a lubberly brigantine came staggering athwart our course, and by wrongly porting her helm at a critical moment very nearly brought about a collision. For half a minute the steering of the *Miranda* claimed my undivided attention, but though it was touch-and-go, my efforts successfully averted the danger, and the brigantine went on her way in safety. But her clumsiness had a serious result. When I looked again at the spot below me where Vizard should have been, it was vacant, nor could I see him anywhere on deck.

It will be readily seen that his disappearance did not add to my comfort. I did not know whether he was still on board or had managed to leap on to the brigantine as she shaved our counter. She had passed so close that I thought it just possible he might have done so; but, on the other hand, it was more than probable that he had only taken advantage of my preoccupation to conceal himself somewhere out of range of my pistol with a view to hatching some fresh devilry. He might have slipped down the companion to the cuddy, or into the stoke-hole, and I had now to be prepared for a sudden attack from any dark

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corner. I had removed the weapons from his person, it was true, but that was no reason why there should not be more below.

I steered onwards, literally keeping my eyes all round my head. Unfortunately the moon's light had become fitful, being obscured now and again by passing clouds, but it was nearly always bright enough to distinguish moving objects on deck, had there been such. Yet for over an hour I saw nothing, and heard nothing to prove Vizard's presence on board. At the end of that time the rattling of the tackle on the davit that carried our only boat told me what was up.

By some means Vizard had contrived to lower the boat, and was leaving the steamer; but his wounded arm suggested that he must have help, and I waited anxiously till the boat should appear astern to see if he was accompanied. In a second or two I caught sight of her, bobbing in the *Miranda's* wake, and the secret of Vizard's escape was solved by the presence of a second person who was pulling the oars. At first I thought this must be Dicey, but remembering the grievous nature of his wound my suspicions turned to the engineer and were instantly confirmed by my giving a signal to the engine-room which met with no response.

It was clear enough now what had happened. While I was occupied in averting a collision with the brigantine, Vizard had bolted into the stoke-hole hatch, and had enlisted the aid of the engineer in lowering the boat, which they must have reached unseen by me while the moon was under a cloud. On the whole I was rather relieved than otherwise to be quit of the strain of watching for an attack, and when Vizard shouted a derisive farewell from the fast receding boat I returned it with interest. I made no doubt that on the information I should lay he would be speedily traced wherever he might land, and in any case his flight seemed to be a confession that his power for evil was broken.

The only thing that troubled me now was the need of someone to look after the engines and furnace. At present, in the open sea, so long as the fire did not want replenishing, and a full head of steam was on, I was all right, but the time would soon come when I should either have to lash the helm and go and stoke the fire myself, or make one of the sailors do it for me, both of which alternatives had their risks. I rather wondered that Vizard, by raking out the fires before his departure, had not put me to the inconvenience of having to visit the stoke-hole at once; but I supposed that in his haste to get away even his fiendish ingenuity had overlooked the point.

I rushed up on deck.

I did him sore injustice, as I was soon to learn. The head of steam lasted for an hour or so after he had gone, and then I could tell by the slackening speed that the furnace must be coaled if we were not to come to a standstill. The two Italian sailors were still sleeping, and thinking them best left as they were, I ran down to do the business myself. The engine-room hatch was a mere manhole, with a stout ladder running down to the well in which the machinery played, a second ladder leading to the stokehole below. I had nearly reached the bottom of this second descent when I noticed that the stoke-hole was lit up with other light than what came from the furnace door, and looking for the source, I found it in a candle close to the side of the vessel. But that was not

Found him in a sitting posture.

the worst. *The candle was stuck in a keg of gunpowder, which the flame was already nearing.*

Instinctively I rushed up on deck, for I had seen that the explosion was too near at hand for me to attempt to move the candle, and it was well that I did so. I had scarcely put the length of the ship between me and the engine-hatch when the powder went off with a mighty roar, the deck planks over the spot upheaved and flew in the air, and the sound of rushing water told me that the steamer's side was shattered—that she was sinking.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Dr. Zavertal will Prescribe."

A hasty inspection of the engine-room showed that the *Miranda* had not more than half an hour to float. The explosion, as no doubt Vizard had intended, had torn a great rent in her side, through which the sea was pouring in. The two sailors were running about crazed with fright, and were quite useless in the emergency, though it is doubtful if anything could have been done had they kept cool, so great was the damage. The one boat was gone, and there was no time to build a raft.

Finding our case hopeless, my first impulse was to go and see if Dicey was alive, so that in that event I might bring him on deck and so give him a better chance. Ruffian as he was, I did not like the idea of his dying like a rat in a trap without knowing what was going on. On entering the cuddy I found him in a sitting posture against the cabin wall in a great pool of blood, the loss of which had made him delirious, for he was babbling unintelligibly. With a good deal of trouble I hoisted him up the companion, and once on deck the fresh air seemed to revive him a little. He had wit enough left to see that the steamer was fast going down by the head, and he allowed me to make him fast to a spare boom on the chance of keeping him afloat till picked up.

I had scarcely got him secured to the spar when the *Miranda* pitched forward, recovered herself, and then pitched again, bows under, and went down like a stone, leaving me hanging on to the spar. We must have gone down about twenty feet with the suction, but soon rose, myself none the worse for the dip, but Dicey more dead than alive. The two sailors must have sunk at once, for they were never seen again, and small loss either.

My only hope now lay in the chance that some vessel might come our way before hunger and thirst prevailed,

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and I scanned the horizon anxiously for a sail or smoke. It had been daylight for some time, but the dawn had come up with a haze that up to the sinking of the vessel had limited the range of vision to a mile or so, and it was therefore with a thankful heart that I saw a great steamer heading right for us not more than half a mile away. A second glance caused me to rub my eyes and stare harder still. There was no mistaking those creamy funnels and tapering, gilded bows. It was the *Queen of Night*, steering to the south-east, on a course that would take her to Alexandria.

She came steadily on at fifteen knots, and it soon became apparent that the spar and its occupants had been seen from the bridge, for at a distance of two hundred yards I heard the engine-bell ring "Stop," and immediately afterwards a boat shot out from the steamer's side. Though strong arms sent her speeding across the water, to me she seemed to crawl, so eager was I for the news she would bring. As she dashed up to the spar I saw that the bo'sun was in charge. When I sang out to him by name he looked frightened—rather to my surprise, for we had been very good friends—and then I remembered that he had probably been told that I was mad.

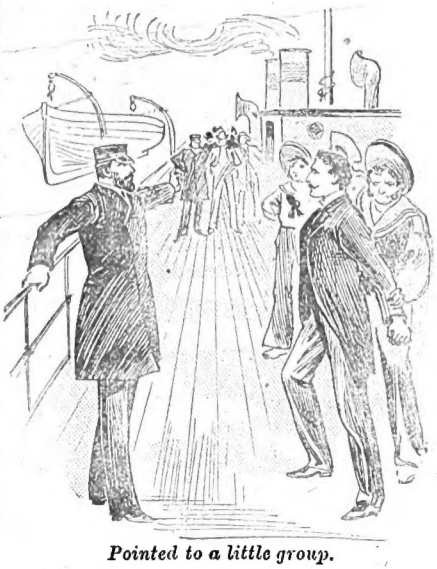
Dicey had relapsed into unconsciousness, and, at my request, he was first taken into the boat, the bo'sun not addressing me directly during the operation beyond remarking that "it was a rum go." Further, after I had got into the boat, and all the way to the ship, he preserved a reticence which seemed a little singular, even if he did imagine me to be a harmless lunatic. But I managed to extract from him the one piece of information for which my heart was hungering—that there had been no more deaths on board, and that, so far as he knew, all the passengers were well. After that he was welcome, for all I cared, to content himself with remarking that "it was the rummiest cruise he ever heard tell on."

The hour was still so early that there were but few people about to witness our arrival. As soon as the boat came alongside, the ladder was thrown to us, and among the faces peering over the rail in undisguised curiosity, I

Sent her speeding across the water.

recognised that of McIntyre, who had superseded me in the command. I was glad he was on deck, for I knew him for a decent, honest fellow, and had no thought but that when he heard my story and explanation he would allow me to reinstate myself without demur.

Imagine, then, my surprise when, the moment I was over the side half-a-dozen seamen closed round me, evidently acting under orders, and McIntyre, ignoring my proffered hand, instructed them to "use me gently." That specious scoundrel Zavertal had clearly lied so circumstantially as to get himself believed, and my troubles were not over yet.



Pointed to a little group.

"This is a nice sort of welcome to give to your captain, McIntyre," I said, "especially after he has been twice nearly murdered."

He cast his eyes down shamefacedly, as though he didn't like his job, then spoke up boldly: "Don't make it harder for me, sir, than it is already. I have taken command by cabled authority from the owners. And I have the Doctor's instructions that you—that you are to be taken care of."

"How can that be?" I exclaimed. "Doctor Zavertal's last move was to have me wrongly shut up in an asylum at Genoa. How was he to know that you were going to pick me up at sea from a craft which his associate and fellow-villain, Vizard, sank not an hour ago?"

McIntyre pointed to a little group that was standing watching us from the door of the surgery, and said simply: "He saw you through his field-glass."

A very probable explanation, but I was too amazed then by what I saw to heed his words. The group comprised not only Zavertal, with his features composed into an expression of friendly concern, but Vizard, looking compassionately dignified, and in the guise of "General Waldo" *Kennard, whom I believed to have been murdered by, and while pursuing, the man with whom he now stood in amicable converse.* The sight so staggered me that I nearly called out to upbraid the American for going over to the enemy, or for having been hand and glove with them all along, but, luckily, I stopped in time.

I recollected Kennard's expressed intention of preserving the Waldo disguise undiscovered so that he might use it again if occasion arose, and it was possible that he was still fooling them successfully in his old character. But then what of the man whom Vizard by his own boasting confession—made when he thought he was on the point of quieting me for ever—had slain on the beach at Leghorn? Was that only a gratuitous lie, fabricated for the purpose of harrowing the last moments of one who had crossed him?

"Come, sir," said McIntyre, as I paused, undecided what to do; "we shan't better matters by standing here. I have had a comfortable deck-cabin prepared for you next the surgery, and you will receive every consideration till you can lay your case before the Consul at Alexandria or the authorities at home—whichever you prefer."

"Very well," I said, raising my voice, "but before I go

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to the cabin I should like to know how that man"—pointing to Vizard—"explains his being in the boat from which I suppose you rescued him?"

"Better not rake that up now," said McIntyre. "Wait till you are calmer and rested, then I'll go into it with you myself."

I could see that he was only trying to humour me as a madman, but I was determined to know what version that villain had given of the occurrences of the night.

"I insist upon being told—as a condition of giving you no trouble," I replied.

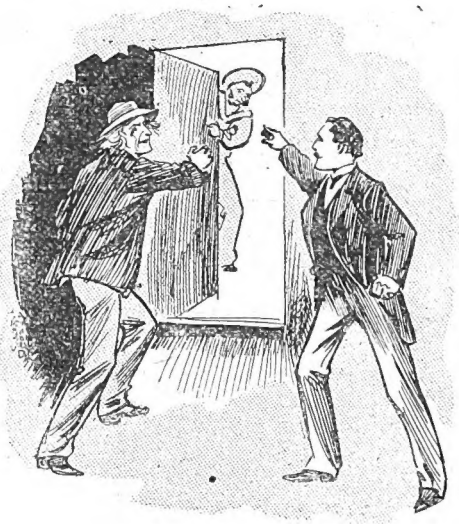
"Well," said McIntyre, ill at ease, "he says he escaped from a small steam-yacht that he had hired at Naples to try and catch us at Cagliari. Says you concealed yourself aboard her, and he quit because you were shooting at the crew and threatening to blow up the vessel."

It was no use protesting, and this counter-charge had been half-expected by me, since I saw that Vizard had been picked up. I recognised that I should have to wait till I could collect rebutting testimony, and difficult enough that would be if Kennard was against me. There was one stipulation, though, that I had to make, even if I had to fight for it.

"Very well," I said, "I shall have to deal with Mr. Vizard later, but if you wish for peace and quietness on this ship, McIntyre, I should strongly advise you not to allow Doctor Zavertal to come near me. I am perfectly well in mind and body, and if he comes to my cabin under the pretext of 'attending' me, I won't engage to control myself."

Zavertal, who had overheard, beckoned McIntyre to where he was standing with "Waldo" and Vizard, and said a few words in an undertone. When McIntyre returned to me, he informed me that my wishes should be met, and added:

"Look here, Forrester, I'm blowed if I like all this, so I have insisted on one thing on my own hook. You are to be allowed to have any of the passengers—that is the male passengers—whom you may select to come and see you—provided, of course, that they are willing."



In real or affected terror he rushed from the cabin.

This was a real good turn, and I thanked McIntyre warmly. I knew well enough that Zavertal would not have consented to the arrangement if he had not had some ulterior object in view, but at any rate, it was a better prospect than complete isolation. I promptly named "General Waldo" as the only visitor I cared to receive at present, and permitted my escort to see me to my cabin. It was one of the best in the ship, being between the library and Zavertal's cabin, and there would have been no fault to find with it, had it not been for the two seamen who took up a position at the door as gaolers.

Two other men had been told off to bring my own property from the Captain's room, and I had just finished arranging the things when "Waldo" entered, shutting the door behind him. I sprang forward, primed with eager questions, but stopped in amazement at his mode of addressing me. He spoke in the pronounced American twang which he had adopted to suit his disguise.

"Wa'al, Captain," he began, "this is a tarnation tall knock-out, I'm thinking. But Emerson C. Waldo isn't the man to go back on a pal in distress. You and me was tol'able close acquainted before we parted at Genoa, and I take it as an honour that you should include me in your visiting list. Been feeling bad in your head, the Doctor was telling me. What can I do to perk your sperrits up? I guess a yarn of the Wild West is powerful soothing to the jaded cerebrum. Shall I take the floor with my little skirmish with the Navajo hoss-thieves?"

So he meant to ignore, even in private, all that had passed between us at Genoa and on that eventful train-journey, and intended in his assumed character to treat me as a lunatic to be humoured and cajoled. All that I could make of it was that he must have been bribed by Zavertal and Vizard to side with them and swear that all I might say of my adventures in his company was the creation of a deluded brain. Too sick at heart and weary to search for further meanings, this, the only explanation of his conduct that presented itself, upset me altogether.

"If that is the way you are going to talk, for God's sake clear out before I do you an injury," I cried. "I thought you were a true man when I asked to see you, but I want no traitor here."

In real or affected terror he rushed from the cabin, leaving me in a whirl of mingled rage and despair. As I grew somewhat calmer my mind turned to Aline, and to trying to devise some scheme, by buying over my gaolers or otherwise, of communicating with her. The passengers, I knew by the sounds on deck outside, were up and about by this time, and it was maddening to think that she might be passing and repassing within a few feet of me and yet be ignorant that I was so near. It was quite likely that steps had been taken to prevent the general body of passengers from hearing that I was on board.

I was still debating how best to effect my purpose, when the sound of a colloquy proceeding at the surgery-door, next to mine, attracted my attention.

First a voice which I recognised as that of the chief stewardess, said: "Is the Doctor in?"

"What is it?" came the reply in Zavertal's tones.

"I came to tell you, sir, that one of the ladies has been taken ill," said the woman. "It is Miss Challenor, who has number seventeen state-room. She has fainted, and is quite unconscious."

"Ah, indeed," was the glibly-spoken answer that froze me to the heart. "Tell Mrs. Brinkworth, who I suppose is with Miss Challenor, that Dr. Zavertal will be down directly—*and will prescribe.*"

(To be continued.)

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A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots without pain or marking the skin, and will willingly forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Please address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

THE FIRST GRAND 'PIONEER' REDUCTION SALE

By Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON, the Well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds.
TO THE INFLUENTIAL READERS OF *Short Stories*, AND MAY NOT APPEAR AGAIN.

This is the first announcement of a Reduction in the price of our manufactures for ten long years, and is of great importance to parties furnishing.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the Nations of the Earth.

Gigantic Sale of the "Queen's Royal" Household

Sale Price **2/-** **HEARTHRUGS** (Reg.) Sale Price **2/-**

IN REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERNS, measuring 6ft. long and 3ft. wide. These HEARTHRUGS have gained a world-wide reputation for MAGNIFICENCE, CHEAPNESS, and UTILITY, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction.

SPECIAL OFFER.—Three for 5s. 9d., Six for 11s. 3d., Twelve for 22s.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.

Gigantic Sale of the "Queen's Royal" Household Reversible Rich Turkey Pattern

Trade Mark on all Goods. Beware of Imitations. **CARPETS** (Reg.) *Trade Mark on all Goods. Beware of Imitations.*

Admittedly the Cheapest in the World. *Woven without seam. Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When Ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.*

6ft. by 9ft.	Sale Price.	9/6	10½ft. by 12ft.	Sale Price.	20/6
8ft. by 9ft.		11/6	12ft. by 12ft.		22/6
6ft. by 12ft.		12/6	9ft. by 15ft.		21/6
9ft. by 9ft.		13/6	12ft. by 13½ft.		25/6
9ft. by 10½ft.		15/6	12ft. by 15ft.		28/6
9ft. by 12ft.		17/6	12ft. by 18ft.		33/6
9ft. by 13½ft.		19/6	12ft. by 21ft.		38/6

H.R.H. Prince L. of Battenberg.
H.R.H. Prince K. Bigit, Siam.
Marquis of Breadalbane.
Marquise de Biddle Cope.
Lord Farnham.
Lord Henry Fitzgerald.
Lord Lee.
Sir Henry de Bathe.
Sir Henry Bellinghm.
Sir E. H. Blair, Bart.
Sir L. Lacon.
Sir R. Cayley.
Archbishop of York.
Bishop of Capetown.

REMARKS.—A lady customer writes complaining that we send out too large a carpet for the money. Be this so or not, we send out no Carpet measuring less than 6ft. by 9ft.—even for 3s. 6d.

TEST THEM. THEY WILL SURPRISE YOU.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE (CHANCERY DIVISION), HODGSON v. WEBB BROTHERS.—On the 18th day of July, 1890, his lordship Mr. Justice Chitty granted an interim injunction, restraining Messrs. Webb Brothers of Hackney Wick, from infringing Mr. Fredk. Hodgson's Trade Mark "Eclipse," No. 93,774 (Leeds).

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS.

100,000 'ECLIPSE' CARPETS (Regd.)

GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.

Sale Price **3/6** Each.

This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract, made with readers of *Short Stories* only. We will forward direct from the looms to any address on receipt of amount, A GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET, the largest ever sold at the price. Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not Printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. An "Eclipse" Rug sent with Carpet 1/- extra.

Sale Price **3/6** Each.

KILKEA CASTLE, MAGENY, CO. KILDARE, 17th August, 1894. LADY EVA FITZGERALD writes: "The 'Eclipse' Carpets supplied by Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son—her ladyship is much pleased with them."

SPECIAL OFFER.

Two Carpets and Two Rugs 8/-, or Four Carpets and Four Rugs 15/6. Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly Examine and Compare these Carpets.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. Do not miss this opportunity. It may not occur again.

"SHORT STORIES" CARPET COUPON, 16/11/95.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send any goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. (Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

Colossal Sale of Rich Velvet Pile Real Brussels

Sale Price **6/6** **HEARTHRUGS** Sale Price **6/6**

In rich Oriental and Indian Art Designs, measuring 6ft. by 3ft., which for price, real value, weight, and richness of manufacture will be found unapproachable.

SPECIAL OFFER.—Three Rugs, 19s.; Six for 37s.

Melville Castle, Glasswade, Midlothian, June 1st.—The Right Honourable the VISCOUNTESS MELVILLE writes: "I am very pleased with the 'Royal' Velvet Hearthrugs to hand, and would like four more Hearthrugs. Her ladyship would also like two Velvet Carpets at 39s., one ditto 60s. 6d., to match them. Cheque £8 14s. inclosed."

COLOSSAL SALE OF RICH VELVET PILE

REAL BRUSSELLS CARPETS

Extraordinarily Heavy, very Best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for putting down):

REDUCED SALE PRICE LIST.

4½ft. by 7ft.,	11/-	VELVET PILE, BRUSSELS CARPET SQUARES.	9ft. by 12ft.,	38/-
6ft. by 9ft.,	18/-		11ft. by 12ft.,	47/-
7½ft. by 9ft.,	23/-		12ft. by 13½ft.,	59/-
9ft. by 9ft.,	28/-		12ft. by 16ft.,	69/-
9ft. by 10½ft.,	33/-		12ft. by 18ft.,	77/-

Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel of excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

TO READERS OF *SHORT STORIES* ONLY.

Sale Price **9/-** Each.

SAVE ALL INTERMEDIATE PROFITS.
Special Sale of REVERSIBLE WOVEN ANTIQUE REAL INDIAN PATTERN.

CARPETS.

IN LATEST STYLE. These CARPETS are suitable for covering any room; they are exactly 9ft. square, and blended in the RICHEST and MOST CHASTE DESIGNS we have ever offered at the price. They can be had to suit any assemblage of furniture.

In ordering state if dark or light Ground preferred.

H.I.H. Eugenie de Christoforo.
Princess Palœologœ Nicephorœ Commenœ.
Priucess De Croy.
Dowager Marchioness Londonderry.
Dowager Marchioness Downshire.
Duchess of Wellington.
Duchess of Richmond.
Marchioness of Breadalbane.
Marchioness of Hastings
Marchioness of Drogheda.
Marchioness of Bute.
Countess Dowager Lady Thomas.
Countess Dowager of Morton.

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE "PRUDENTIAL"

REVERSIBLE CARPETS (Regd.)

Reversible, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

Size.	Reduced Sale Price. Each.
6ft. by 9ft.	5/6
7½ft. by 9ft.	7/6
9ft. by 9ft.	8/6
9ft. by 10½ft.	9/6
9ft. by 12ft.	11/6
10½ft. by 12ft.	13/6
12ft. by 12ft.	15/6
12ft. by 13½ft.	17/6
12ft. by 15ft.	19/6
12ft. by 18ft.	24/0

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

(Copyright registered.) If this design is wanted, kindly quote Registered Number 247,930.

Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd, 1894.—Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

A Reversible Prudential Hearthrug (Regd.), to match above Carpets, sent for 1/6 extra, size 2yds. long and 1yd. wide. Special Offer, Three Hearthrugs for 4/3, or Six for 8s., or Twelve for 15/6, sterling value.

We Rely upon the Spontaneous Repeat Orders from our Clients for the Maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a Quarter of a Century.

All orders dispatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON & SON, MANUFACTURERS, IMPORTERS, AND MERCHANTS, WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS." N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates.

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